

May 21, 2007

**Association of Partners for Public Lands  
NPS Affinity Forum  
Sunday and Monday, May 6 and 7, 2007  
Denver, Colorado**

**Notes**

*Prepared by Ellen Cull, Management & Organizational Consultant, Meeting Facilitator*

The purpose of this forum was to develop a unified and proactive agenda for the role of associations in the NPS and its Centennial. The outcomes were identification of:

- ✓ Six issues/opportunities to pursue in order for cooperating associations to be most effective in working with the NPS to achieve its goals, both overall and in the Centennial Initiative,
- ✓ Possible strategies to address these issues/opportunities, and
- ✓ The role APPL might most effectively play in advancing these strategies.

Participants in the forum were:

Organization	Person	Title
APPL	Donna Asbury	Executive Director
	Nancy Kotz	Member Services Coord.
	Amy Matthews	Marketing & Outreach Coordinator
	Krista Muddle	Admin & Ed Services Coordinator
Alaska Natural History Assoc.	Charles Money	Executive Director
Black Hills Parks & Forests Assoc.	Steve Baldwin	Executive Director
Eastern National	Chesley Moroz	President
Glacier National Park Fund	Jane Ratzlaff	Executive Director
Glacier Natural History Assoc.	Wendy Hill	Executive Director
Golden Gate National Parks Assoc.	Greg Moore	Executive Director
Grand Teton Natural History Assoc.	Jan Lynch	Executive Director
Hawaii Natural History Assoc.	Anne Sheftic	Board Member
Jefferson National Parks Assoc.	David Grove (Mon. only)	Executive Director/CEO
Joshua Tree National Park Assoc.	Nancy Downer	Executive Director
Mesa Verde Museum Assoc.	Tracey Chavis (Sun. only)	Executive Director
Northwest Interpretive Assoc.	Jim Adams	Executive Director
Redwood Park Association	Linda Appanaitis	Executive Director
	Mary Gearheart	Board Member
Rocky Mountain Nature Assoc.	Curt Buchholtz (Mon. only)	Executive Director
San Francisco Maritime NP Assoc.	Éamon O'Byrne	Executive Director
Sequoia Natural History Assoc.	Mark Tilchen	Executive Director
Shenandoah Natural Park Assoc.	Greta Miller	Executive Director
Western National Parks Assoc.	LeAnn Simpson	Executive Director/CEO
Yellowstone Association	Jeff Brown	Director of Education
	Pat Cole (Mon. only)	Executive Director
Yosemite Association	Beth Pratt	Acting Executive Director

These notes are divided into two sections. Part A includes the discussion of six major issues/opportunities, strategies to pursue them, actions to take in the short-term, and APPL's role in it. Part B includes notes of discussion that led up to the identification of these issues, etc.

Things that were agreed to by all participants are indicated with a check are in **bold**. Notes of discussion are indicated with a diamond symbol and are in regular text.

**Part A:**  
**Issues/opportunities, strategies and action plans**

**Issues/opportunities for development of strategies and action plans**

The group agreed that:

- ✓ **The overall goal of this effort is recognition of what cooperating associations bring as full partners in achieving the NPS mission.**
- ✓ **The six major areas of opportunity to achieve this goal that need to be pursued are:**
  1. **Communication**
  2. **Role definition and authorities**
  3. **Repositioning cooperating associations in the NPS and through the Centennial Initiative**
  4. **Capacity development, investment and resources**
  5. **Vision for what we want parks, cooperating associations, and APPL to look like in 2016**

Participants broke out into small groups on each of the five topics. Each group did the following:

- ✓ Clarified the issue or opportunity,
- ✓ Identified a possible strategy/ies to pursue, and
- ✓ Identified the most important short-term actions to take.

The small group discussions were shared with the large group and there was further large group clarification, feedback and possible revision to the approach.

**1. Communication**

**Issue/opportunity**

- ❖ There are issues with communication in many ways:
  - NPS – to/from, local, regional and national
  - APPL – representation/information, members to boards, APPL to NPS and Congress, members to members (use of list serve)
  - All partners – to/from friends groups, SCA, NPCA, CA, NPF, institutes
- ❖ Training all audiences

## Strategy

- ❖ Representation in the Centennial Initiative
  - Share past successes
  - What we bring to the table
  - Desire for role in the Centennial Challenge – we support it
  - Appoint “X” to represent us
- ❖ APPL
  - Representation to NPS – seek member input on all issues, share concerns/ issues with members, NLC – spending time and official agenda, regular meeting with Director, communicate with each member of Partnership Council
  - Information to members – “fishing” for information – sharing asap, monthly update from ED
  - Congress – NPS may need us (because of Centennial Initiative), advocacy team – “Representation Corps”
  - Members to members – list serve as a way to share with each other
- ❖ NPS
  - From – park level – local park assoc. ED, direct to ED APPL – include us (regional/national level), representation at meeting – senior leadership, highlight cooperating association partnerships in Centennial Challenge communications package, cooperating associations under Partnership Office
  - To – DC forum annually, “fishing” for information, communicate our successes (individual – cc APPL)
- ❖ Communication among all partners
  - Partners forum at the park level
  - APPL Executive Director relations with other partners
  - Relationship to “Partnership Office”
- ❖ Training
  - NPS – new superintendent training, training on benefits of partners, Fundamentals II – Chiefs of Interp, partnership skills
  - Cooperating associations – partnership schools, “tooting our own horn,” understanding the NPS – structure, authorities, roles, reporting requirements
  - Other partners – roles, reporting requirements

## Short-term actions

- ✓ **Organize a meeting with Mary Bomar (with a forum), aiming for June.**
  - **Common voice**
  - **Set agenda with examples, based on discussions at this meeting**
  - **Requested action**
  - **Follow-up – APPL convention**
  - **All will be invited, and the meeting will proceed with whoever can be there.**

- **APPL will report who attended and what was discussed asap.**
- ✓ **Increased communication from APPL and communication to APPL**
- **The Board will discuss communication issues between APPL and the membership, including the following possible methods:**
  - **Holding a bi-monthly or monthly conference call. WNPA is willing to host it. We might try three of them and then check in.**
  - **Appointing a “Harry/Harriet” – a representative from a member organization to participate in NPS discussions.**
  - **Share the ED’s monthly update to the Board with member ED’s.**
- ✓ **Offer to testify and provide Centennial Challenge letters of support.**

## **2. Role definition and authorities**

### Issue/opportunity

- ❖ The roles of partners are unclear, resulting in confusion, uncertain expectations, redundancy and missed opportunities.

### Strategy

- ❖ Get NPS cooperating associations moved to the Partnership Office.
- ❖ Meet with Friends Alliance members and other friends groups to talk about ways to work together, come up with our own suggestions for the NPS to avoid conflicts.
- ❖ Define our roles as connecting people to parks – as being the connector.
- ❖ Be open-minded about opportunities to work together.
- ❖ Sell our strengths to the NPS – strong boards, history working with the NPS, infrastructure to support in place
- ❖ Develop a clear understanding of the legislation that defines how we function
- ❖ Not agreed to by small group members – open membership to friends groups

### Short-term actions

- ✓ **Formal request from APPL for cooperating associations to join the Partnership Office, using the five elements in the Centennial Challenge.**
- ✓ **APPL to do a survey of members to identify issues/facts about working with friends groups. APPL will keep cooperating association responses confidential. They will put together a list of issues, with specific examples.**
- ✓ **Then there will be a meeting with park friends groups to talk about how to work most productively together.**
- ✓ **Clarify legislative authorities for cooperating associations.**
- ✓ **Identify areas in DO32 that may be counterproductive to good relationships, such as five-day termination and aid level “negotiation.” APPL will start a process to respond officially and propose solutions.**

## **3. Repositioning cooperating associations in the NPS through the Centennial Initiative**

Issue/opportunity

- ❖ We need a self and partner process of examining the future according to the five themes.
- ❖ Staying within our field and using our strengths – transforming the NPS visitor experience
- ❖ Using the Centennial Initiative to reposition some of our organizations to become both friends and cooperating associations

Strategy

- ✓ **A functional planning process at the park/local level involving NPS and partners within two months to exchange organizational views and objectives and to refine general project scope and outcomes.**
- ✓ **A joint (either NPS or Congress) process to specify which cooperating association aid could be matched.**
- ✓ **Harness the vast park audience that can be connected through the parks through quality merchandise development.**
- ✓ **Let the NPS know we want to be involved in the Centennial Challenge now.**

Short-term actions

- ✓ **Develop an action plan format/ tool kit to facilitate this conversation at the park level, and communicate about it.**
- ✓ **Let Mary Bomar and whoever else be aware that the rush to get these projects in has resulted in commitments that we haven't agreed to and important agreements may have been missed.**
- ✓ **APPL continue to track and have input into the discussion and input into the legislation.**
- ✓ **Depending on what is happening, cooperating associations may need to approach their own Congressional delegations.**

**4. Capacity development, investment and resources**

Issue/opportunity

- ❖ Capacity for all NPS cooperating associations to have a voice and be heard
- ❖ Increase internal capacity of agency to be better partners
- ❖ Increase internal capacity of cooperating associations
  - Resources – computer systems, staffing, authorities, training, Board development, facilities
  - Agency support
- ❖ Preparedness for drastic staffing turnover within agency and cooperating associations (need for succession planning)

Strategy

Brainstormed options:

- ❖ Training - agency
  - Influence and deliver “intake” training
  - Help define competencies for working with cooperating association partners
  - Target upcoming leaders
  - Make training more available and accessible
  - Offer trainings on maximizing existing partnerships
- ❖ More courses available and geared to staff and board members
- ❖ Create training projects and proposals eligible for Centennial Challenge funding
- ❖ Tools to assess capacity
- ❖ Increase networking – affinity groups, roundtable discussions
- ❖ Create mentoring program
- ❖ Directors’ forum/retreat comprised of ED’s and Regional Directors

Common ground in the small group:

- ❖ Agency funded training needed
- ❖ Agency needs to buy into the concept that they need training to be ready for 2016.
- ❖ Agency needs to understand, appreciate and support cooperating associations need to invest money in themselves.
- ❖ Increased cooperating association voice and influence

Short-term actions

- ✓ **Propose to Director capacity building pilot training funded by agency, jointly developed by NPS and APPL/cooperating associations.**
- ✓ **Influence the language to include in the current Centennial Challenge bill that makes capacity building training eligible for matching funds.**
- ✓ **Identify key areas for capacity that cooperating associations need and communicate it (strategic investment).**

Other notes of large group discussion

- ❖ Don’t make it look like we’re telling them how to do the capacity building training.

**5. Vision for what we want parks, cooperating associations, and APPL to look like in 2016**

Issue/opportunity

- ❖ The issue is having a vision that includes roles for parks, partners and APPL.
- ❖ There are five themes that are coming out for the Centennial and we can build the vision around them:
  - Stewardship
  - Education
  - Environmental leadership

- Recreation
- Organizational renewal

❖ Stewardship

NPS	CA/park	APPL
390 units have volunteers	390 units have volunteers	Leadership and affinity groups
All receive donations	All receive donations	Training
Youth program	Youth program	Engage youth directly – interns increase
	Endowment fund / long-term stewardship	Future stewards in non-profit partnerships
Visitors engaged/ engaged public – Responsible visitors		
Change in attitude → connection – ownership – value parks		
Act as stewards – message		

❖ Education

NPS	CA/park	APPL
Evolution from “campfire” range to inclusive, broader educational staff / responsibility	Diverse media/ methods of delivery, of education (technology)	Make connections on national/ global level to provide resources
Outside and inside the park		Help educate public on partners’ education role
Integrated education – progression of experiences – involve communities	Integrated education – progression of experiences – involve communities	Help introduce technology as relates to education
Special programs for younger people	Special programs for younger people	How to evaluate education content

❖ Environmental leadership

NPS	CA/park	APPL
NPS takes care of park	Sustaining best practices	Setting best practices for members
Work with other agencies to make a difference	Funding/ creating institutes, training courses	World members
	Citizen science	
	Restore glaciers	
World view – effort to reach out to be the leader		

❖ Recreation

NPS	CA/park	APPL
Health / quality of life Clean environment Access	Connect these to the parks	Messaging campaign about experiences
Authentic recreation	Connecting diversity of demographics to recreation and experiences while staying within park's mission Reflective recreation – Joseph Say	Bring forward trends/heritage to members  Training

❖ Organizational renewal

NPS	CA/park	APPL
Capacity		
Values and invests in its partnerships – Tangible resources Staff training to ensure partnerships are sustained	Staff training	Staff training
Succession – have tangible action plan, transition to next generation		

Strategy

- ✓ **Articulate a vision for 2016 with all partners**
- ✓ **Endorse the themes of the Centennial Initiative with a willingness to engage in long-term planning**

Short-term actions

- ✓ **Convene a meeting for all partners – APPL take the lead.**
- ✓ **Hold a session at the conference.**
- ✓ **Create a vehicle for representation of membership and highlight stewardship for the long-term.**

Other notes of large group discussion

- ❖ Make sure citizen renewal/civic engagement is part of these five themes. We can interpret these themes.
- ❖ The meeting for all partners could be a separate track at the convention or day before or after the convention.
- ❖ The vehicle for representation could be a task force or affinity group to engage members who are passionate about this.

APPL role

The role of the Association is described in each of the five strategies and action plans above. Following is a list pulling out some of the most immediate actions to be prioritized and undertaken by the Association:

- ✓ **Write a letter to the Director with messages from this meeting.**
- ✓ **Market the convention to all partners.**
- ✓ **Share information on a regular basis and seek input from members.**
- ✓ **Develop the agenda for the meeting with the Director/forum.**
- ✓ **Clarify legislative authorities.**
- ✓ **Develop response to DO32.**
- ✓ **Survey members regarding example of friends/cooperating association interplay at local level.**
- ✓ **Identify areas for capacity building.**
- ✓ **Establish 2016 Task Force.**
- ✓ **Work with John Reynolds on the Centennial Initiative legislation.**
- ✓ **Develop a tool kit for local discussion.**
- ✓ **Develop an in-depth session or track at the Convention.**
- ✓ **Maintain a place at the table/key contact.**

## **Part B:** **Background discussion**

### **NPS – priorities, wants, challenges**

Participants individually identified up to three responses to each of the following:

- ❖ What do you think are priorities for the NPS now and what does it want from the Centennial Challenge?
- ❖ What do you think the NPS wants from its non-profit partners, in general and in relation to the Centennial Challenge?
- ❖ What challenges and issues do you think the NPS is experiencing in relation to the role of non-profit partners, in general and in the Centennial Challenge?

These responses were then grouped into categories.

### **NPS priorities**

- ❖ Money
  - All kinds from all sources
  - Operating increase
  - Infusion of funds
  - Funding parks adequately
  - Like all of us – looking for financial increase to help operate parks and keep them open
  - Permanent increase in ONPS base funding
  - Base funding

- Funds for projects previously unattainable
- Build private sector funding for projects
- Tap into philanthropy further
- Make the Challenge work to leverage these new funds
- ❖ Increased public involvement and visitation
  - Reverse declining public interest in national parks
  - Connecting American public, especially children, to public lands (become more relevant)
  - To increase awareness of the national parks
  - Revitalize parks but I worry they mean infrastructure only
  - Should be – engaging American public with parks
  - Constituency building
  - To get greater appreciation and support to the parks and get visitation numbers back up to the past records
  - Visibility
  - Connections to parks
  - Renewed relevance to American public
- ❖ New/refurbished image
  - Reclaiming positive reputation through better leadership
  - Improve public image of what NPS is/represents
  - Stature/renewed identity
  - Visibility through success in helping fund our parks
  - “Saving the world” – only parks/people’s experiences have value
  - Marketing & outreach to be expanded
- ❖ Staffing
  - Staffing in general -- 6
  - Seasonal staffing
  - Full time interpretation staff
- ❖ Improve infrastructure
  - Backlog of maintenance needs – 3
  - Fix infrastructure problems
  - Infrastructure – rebuilt and rehab
  - Improve infrastructure
  - Decay of buildings and plant
  - Immense backlog of projects
- ❖ Help with program delivery
  - Outside help with backlog in services
  - Enhance currently viable programs
  - Build new programs using Centennial funding going beyond 2016
- ❖ Protecting resources
  - Resource management – steering money that way
- ❖ Not clear what their priorities are

- You see things all over the map – depends on Region, Superintendent, Chief of Interpretation
- Not sure they have a priority – have not seen any organized response at park level – overwhelmed??
- ❖ Partnerships
  - To extend agency capabilities
  - Community and park focused partnerships
- ❖ Other ideas
  - Change the culture/create an entrepreneurial spirit – connects to changing society
  - Changes that will be lasting to the NPS future
  - Visible signs that initial appropriation will make a significant difference to parks → visitors
  - Step toward privatization
  - Figuring out a way the “smaller” parks can benefit from the Centennial Challenge
  - Creating Centennial Challenge projects for submission to Regional Office
  - Not to lose opportunity for matching funds
  - Projects already in the works

#### **What the NPS wants from non-profit partners**

- ❖ Funds
  - Money to help NPS fix their problems
  - Funds to help enhance their federal funds
  - Financial help on their terms
  - Funding
  - Open check book
  - Support – services and funds
  - Increased philanthropy
  - Leverage additional supporters
  - Financial support
  - Funding to allow them to get matching funds . . . pledge NOW
  - Money for operations, more money for operations, CONTROL
  - Money, both existing and new partners
  - CASH!! Capital campaign is accurate.
  - Money!
  - Money – all kinds from all places/sources
- ❖ Marketing and exposure
  - Public support of NPS activities and goals
  - Appearance of grassroots support
  - Help make efforts more vocal to public
  - Increased visibility/connections to public

- Look good in eyes of public
- Connections to audience
- Increased visibility of NPS and connection to audiences
- Public to re-engage with NPS lands and needs
- Visitor engagement
- More public involvement in terms of public funds
- ❖ Help making the Centennial successful
  - Support in bill's passage – 2
  - Help clarifying what the Centennial should accomplish
  - Commitment of long range plan focused on Centennial Challenge
  - Fund their Centennial projects
  - Matching funds
  - Commit to Centennial Challenge projects so that matching funds are received
- ❖ Engagement
  - Active, engaged partner who can act and react quickly
  - Quickly step up all long range planning/goals
  - Unified voice
- ❖ Program delivery
  - Provide some of the education
  - Additional programs
  - Programs that complement but don't compete with NPS programs
- ❖ Expertise
  - Fundraising capacity and expertise
  - Additional expertise
- ❖ Other
  - Less confusion, fewer partners
  - As far as cooperating associations, I'm not sure – wasn't really part of announcement so not sure they are really even looking at us
  - Flexibility to apply, use, leverage funds
  - Administration of funds?
  - Efficient, streamlined communication
  - Administration wants to appear "green"

#### **Challenges and issues the NPS is experiencing in relation to non-profit partners**

- ❖ Lack of clarity about roles of partners
  - Unclear about roles of partners
  - What is the role of cooperating associations?
  - NPS is confusing the role of cooperating associations with friends groups.
  - Roles of nonprofit partners – Interp vs. Partnership
  - Partners are starting to blur mission lines.
  - Who is a partner?
  - Too many partners to manage

- Range of partners
- Whose agenda is it? (NPCA) – roles of nonprofit partners
- Perceived competition vs. cooperation
- NPS is putting partners into competition with each other
- Smaller partners getting “piece of the pie”
- Rhetoric doesn’t match practice
- Legal framework/obstacles
- Partnership/power sharing
- Thinks of other nonprofit partners as being more capable of delivering more “flash” for the money
- Not having enough information about how partners that typically don’t do fundraising can really help
- New Director does not fully understand how important a role cooperating associations play in parks.
- Lack of clarity and equity in working with partners
- Reestablishing “rules of engagement” with partners, especially new generation of managers
- Needs to figure out how to “engage” them
- Mixed messages in terms of how to work with their nonprofit partners
- Inconsistency in parks in terms of dealing with partners
- Lack of organized voice
- Structural challenge in parks – cooperating associations report through Chief of Interpretation, Friends Groups go to Partnership Coordinator
- Also nationally – Partnership Office is coordinating Centennial Challenge and Friends Groups work through them and are kept well informed. Cooperating associations are hearing nothing.
- ❖ Implementing the Centennial Challenge
  - Get legislation
  - Vision to practicality
  - Keep Centennial Initiative from looking like Mission 66
  - Selection of projects/programs
  - Carrying out projects
  - Program delivery or project management
  - Maximize the match each year
  - By historic standards, the financial goals are very ambitious.
- ❖ Adjusting to the culture of philanthropy
  - Who will keep what \$?
  - Greater dependence on partners’ \$
  - Most money comes with strings attached
  - How to define “matching” funds
  - Donor recognition as per DO32 limits donor base
  - Matching funds

- New approach to an old system of funding
- ❖ Lack of vision/clear goals
  - Not many in NPS with vision
  - Goals are not clearly defined
  - Ill defined proposed programs
  - Confusion within NPS
  - Clarity, consistency, leadership
  - Not knowing enough about what everyone is making a fuss about
  - National message program needed to create new brand identity for NPS
- ❖ Agreements
  - Agreement infrastructure and enforcement and perceived lack of training
  - Issues with agreements, Solicitor interpretation
  - Capacity to expedite agreements, provide training, etc.
- ❖ Poor communication
  - No clear structure for communication
  - Inability to communicate with partners effectively
- ❖ Other
  - Insufficient time, information to respond effectively
  - Looking like they are not taking care of their responsibility to parks
  - Letting go . . .
  - Lack of skill in partnering
  - Non-profit/non-federal partners' out of the box approaches
  - Grants.gov – treat partners like partners
  - How to stop this from becoming a feeding frenzy – this turns all partners into “commissioned salespeople.”
  - Priorities of NPS vs. priorities of partners
  - Lack of time to work with partners

### **Non-profit partners – priorities, wants, challenges**

Participants individually identified up to three responses to each of the following:

- ❖ What are priorities for NPS non-profit partners at this time?
- ❖ What challenges and issues are non-profit partners experiencing in relation to the NPS, both in general and in the Centennial Challenge?
- ❖ What do non-profit partners want from the NPS and its Centennial Challenge?
- ❖ What are non-profit partners prepared to offer the NPS in relation to its priorities and the Centennial Challenge?

These responses were then grouped into categories.

### **NPS non-profit partner priorities**

- ❖ Clarified roles

- Further establish our roles within the NPS community
- Differentiate roles of partners – cooperating associations vs. friends groups
- Determine what role they want or are capable of assuming
- NPS should clarify roles of partners
- Clarify roles of cooperating associations and friends groups
- Discuss with NPS role of individual partners in Centennial Initiative
- Where do we fit in the big picture?
- Clear authorities
- Where in the NPS do we fit?
- ❖ Raise perceived value
  - How are we valued?
  - Making NPS value our partnership
  - Demonstrate value, bring solutions and opportunities
  - Focus on positives and what we do offer
  - Recognition of what they do/contribute for/to the NPS
  - Getting on NPS radar screen (cooperating associations currently ignored)
  - Raise perceived value
  - Obtain recognition and appreciation for what we do
  - We must prove relevancy for the future (regardless of past contributions).
- ❖ To be included in planning/implementing Centennial Initiative
  - To be an equal partner at the table in Centennial planning
  - Being “at the table”
  - Clear about role they can play in Centennial
  - Figuring out where we will fit into Centennial Challenge so we can be a player in its success
  - Deliver effective response to Centennial asap
  - Meeting in DC between cooperating associations and the Director to discuss issues including the Centennial
  - Expressing enthusiasm for the Centennial Challenge
- ❖ Strong organizations
  - \$\$\$
  - Determine fundraising capability of non-profit
  - Focus or refocus long-range plans
  - Building a business model for the future
  - Maintain quality products and services
  - Fulfill our mission as best we can within parameters set by NPS
  - Build capacity
  - Organizational preparation in all key functions
- ❖ Support parks
  - A vibrant and valued connection of parks to people
  - Funding provided well utilized to fulfill mission
  - Support local parks in their mission and programs

- Visitor education
- To get more support for Interpretation and Education
- Assist with funding without compromising the health of our own organization
- ❖ Building better relationships between partners
  - Heal relationship that feels threatened with partners pitted against each other
  - Healthy relationships with other partners
  - Unify – collective voice and collaborate where different in roles
- ❖ Be informed!
  - Getting information!
- ❖ Strategic engagement
  - A way to communicate effectively with NPS leadership
- ❖ Other
  - Get APPL engaged in issues so they can represent us! This is the priority.
  - What constitutes a donation to be matched – earned or raised revenue?

### **Challenges and issues facing NPS non-profit partners in relation to the NPS**

- ❖ Lack of recognized, appropriate identity and direction for cooperating associations
  - Lack of recognition as partner
  - Being recognized as “partners” as opposed to “tools”
  - Public doesn’t understand role of cooperating association
  - What is our role and can we do what is wanted of us?
  - Work to define role of partners and enforce policy
  - The challenge is to get cooperating associations recognized as a partner.
  - Feeling “left out” by NPS, feeling “left behind” by APPL leadership
  - Schizophrenia of multiple agendas and lack of clarity
  - Frustration with lack of leadership – more obvious when you work with more than one region and more than one park
  - Keeping visitor and education services desirable and profitable
  - Who are we? Extension and interpretation, or revenue generation?
  - NPS chases the hottest “trend” without much thought. Can/should every unit have a “friends” group?
  - Creating a nonprofit vision for 2016
  - Small friends groups can’t meet fundraising challenges so cooperating associations are expected to fundraise
- ❖ Lack of clear communication with NPS
  - Lack of communication with NPS at national and local level
  - Lack of communication and information
  - Disconnect in the communication processes
  - Communication clarity
  - Lack of communication from NPS

- Mixed messages and communication
- Information is not timely so we end up getting demands and veiled threats
- Lack of communication necessary to maximize partnership
- Getting enough information to “buy in”
- Out of “communication loop”
- How do we hear about stuff?
- When is our meeting with Mary?
- ❖ Agreements and authorities
  - Legal authority for cooperating associations is not clear.
  - DO32 is scary.
  - DO32 problems: aid, termination, CUs
  - Same rules do not apply to different types of partners.
  - NPS not enforcing its own policies.
  - Desire of NPS for competitive bidding
  - Grants.gov
- ❖ Pressure and focus on providing additional funding
  - We are being asked to provide more and more money. It’s never enough.
  - Cooperating associations not valued – just look to us for \$\$
  - NPS expects more than is feasible for cooperating association to provide
  - Growth requires resources – we are dependent on NPS for many of our resources (e.g., housing, sales space)
- ❖ Competing with others
  - Potential conflict for funding sources between NPS, friends and cooperating associations/friends
  - Competing for philanthropic dollars
  - How do we collaborate with other 501(c)(3)s?
  - How can partners work together instead of competing?
  - Being in competition with other partners
- ❖ NPS staff inexperience/lack of knowledge
  - Working with really new superintendents who are struggling to figure out they are “the leader”
  - Inexperience on part of NPS in working effectively with partners
  - Varying (or lacking) partnership knowledge and expertise within all levels of NPS staff
  - Working in partnership with those who don’t understand business of nonprofits – need for training on agency side
- ❖ Structure that segregates partners
  - Move to partnership office (out of Interp!)
  - We are not being represented in the Interp & Education Office.
- ❖ Other
  - Changing expectations when administration at parks changes – we tend to outlive them

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- Being asked to fund questionable items outside traditional funding
- Articulating the role of board members
- NPS sees it as “their” money vs. money to be used as effectively as possible.
- Priorities of partner vs. priorities of NPS
- Who holds the money?
- No fundraising program in place
- Getting engaged in planning at park level
- To make a decision on role of our association in program before details of program are worked out
- NPS barriers to effective delivery and implementation
- Same challenge as parks – changing public – shifting economics

### **What non-profit partners want from the NPS**

- ❖ Recognized role as a partner
  - Respect
  - Renewed relationship with NPS
  - Clarification of roles
  - Information on cooperating association’s role
  - Direction from NPS leadership to encourage collaboration instead of competition
  - We need clarity from agency. What do they expect?
  - Recognition/cooperation
  - Recognition and involvement as full partners
  - Expand/improve long-term role
  - Active spirit of cooperation
  - To feel part of the process
  - To be a fully engaged partner in the process
  - A place at the table
  - Recognition for history and past support, as we step up to their future needs
  - To participate in programs and projects not just fundraise for them
  - Clear direction re role associations play
  - To be recognized for the role we already play in parks
  - Recognition as a partner (with mutual goals)
  - Value as partner with shared goals
  - Involvement in the planning as to our roles
  - Direction from NPS on our role in the park
  - Mary Bomar at annual convention
  - Opportunity to expand and clarify long-term role
  - Respect and maybe a thank you once in a while
  - Clarity of specific goals and objectives

- ❖ Clear role in the Centennial
  - To be recognized as part of the success of the Centennial Challenge, even if we do not become fundraisers
  - Attention! Clear goals and how we fit into Centennial
  - Assurance of future involvement in Centennial Challenge process
  - Clarification of their role to the Challenge
  - To be included in the initiative
  - Want to be part of the plan
  - Want this program to work and be successful
- ❖ Tools to do our job
  - Freedom to do what we do best without restraint
  - To be allowed to “think/act” in new ways, i.e. to meet NPS goals without being worn out in “process and guidelines”
  - Clarity on necessary legislative authority and tools (agreements)
  - Representation at the local, regional and national level
  - Very flexible and efficient granting and fund access process
  - Standard request form – NPS has one for program proposal – create one for funding
- ❖ Communication
  - Clear communication vehicle
  - More information
  - Consistent communication flow
  - More information and discussion
  - Regular, clear communication
  - Ask us
- ❖ To strengthen our support to the NPS
  - Ability to achieve mission
  - To help! To continue to support the parks we love
- ❖ Support from the NPS for us
  - Adequate support
  - Allow us to help by supporting us
- ❖ NPS staff/leadership training
  - Partnership training for NPS leaders
  - Top to bottom buy in → staff education
- ❖ Better public understanding of cooperating associations
  - National marketing “brand” and message campaign
  - Help public acknowledge and understand who we are and offer them increased visibility

**What non-profit partners are prepared to offer the NPS in relation to its priorities**

- ❖ Direct connection to the American public

- Connection to public
- Connection to visitor and non-visitor
- Contact with the general public
- Constituency and environment knowledge
- Expertise and PR → we reach millions of people
- Direct connection to visitor
- Daily contact with public
- Lots of members who are already sold on parks
- Education to the public! On the ground in almost every park
- Help in educating the next generation of park users
- Political connections
- ❖ Program/service delivery
  - We can offer our services more than cash – volunteers, staffing, education, etc.
  - Excellent program delivery
  - Experience in program/service delivery
  - Flexibility in program delivery and message delivery
  - To assist in program
  - Delivery of national message about Centennial
  - Work to bring Challenge awareness to our communities
- ❖ Financial and other support
  - \$\$\$
  - Funds that can be matched by the NPS
  - Funds for partnership educational programs
  - Continued aid, services, and quality products
  - \$\$\$ with common commitment, passion and vision for national parks future
  - Resources -- \$, community connections, organizational infrastructure
  - Will maximize support in any way needed
- ❖ Partnership mentoring
  - Valuable insight on creating true collaborative culture with valuable results
  - Capacity to train to help resolve some of these issues
  - Experience in how to get things done in the federal system
  - Market research development of knowledge base for future change
  - Brain trust
- ❖ A true desire to help
  - Understanding of mission
  - Our willingness to be receptive and our desire to help the NPS survive past 2016
  - Trust and accountability
  - A board that wants to help with the Centennial Challenge but doesn't know how
  - Commit to Centennial Challenge projects as doable

- To review and possibly adjust the long-range plan
- ❖ Expertise
  - Education and interpretive skills
  - Unique publications and products/services not available from other partners
  - Expertise and funding of publications and products related to the Centennial Challenge
  - Wide variety in expertise – our boards and staff
  - Expertise, connection to educational and outreach goals
- ❖ Strong organizations
  - Stability
  - Established, efficient, and effective organization already in place
  - Infrastructure and administration
  - Experience and stability beyond the Centennial Challenge
- ❖ Innovation
  - Innovation in program delivery
  - Talent & innovation
  - Expertise in developing innovative programs and products
- ❖ Reality check
  - As to what can happen vs. “pie in the sky” hopes
  - Objective, rational perspective

## **Discussion**

The group discussed the implications of the above for a message to the NPS and more broadly.

- You say the Centennial Challenge is about preparing the national parks for another century of service. To us, it appears to be about money and what you want from us is money.
- We understand that you are trying a new approach, that the reasoning behind the Centennial Challenge is to reframe dialogue around the national park system and jumpstart energy around it instead of talking about backlog – using a different strategy to talk about possibility and opportunity.
- You’re asking people to have faith in the government and what it can do, to revitalize that faith.
- We are not clear what you are looking for us to do. It started as increasing philanthropy and is now non-earned federal dollars.
- How we see our role in general and in the Centennial is . . .
  - This gets to our existential dilemma. Who are we? There’s only so much earned income, and it’s committed. The only place to go is philanthropy.
  - We (cooperating associations) have the best infrastructure. The friends groups have the contacts for fundraising. More of us are looking at becoming one combined organization.

- The Centennial planning has had to roll so fast that you aren't really engaging us at the park level. We are being written down as partners on projects we don't even know about. We're struggling to come up with the money for current programs.
- When we asked whether this was about additional funds or not, the answer wasn't clear.
- We need to assert ourselves more under the organizational renewal theme. Right now, we're more under education. We need to assert ourselves more under the collaborative piece.
- You are concerned that the American people don't value the national parks. We have the vehicle through our publication and education skills. We can shift that to address new audiences.
- Philanthropy in many parks is a mess because there are two different organizations involved. It seems you are expecting that we (cooperating associations) will become fundraisers. Or that we will merge, so there is one partner.
- There won't be a friends group for every national park and monument. There is a cooperating association for each one. There might be multiple models – we can brainstorm what that could be, using our uniqueness, like direct contact to the American public.
- We want to be able to help without become a friends group or taking on fundraising, which we don't have the skills to do.
- We have to bring new programs and different kinds of programs. If the friends group does increase fundraising, we can direct our funds to research and development to help you stay current and relevant. And we can leverage it.
- We're given the opportunity to put partnerships on the radar screen. Cooperating associations aren't considered partners. We can say we like this thing [the Centennial Initiative], we want to be a part of the vision, want to be a part of the NPS in 2016.
- A key question to be answered is, "What are the roles of all these different organizations?" How do we make sure we're not competing with one another?
- The strategic dilemma is this – let's say the NPS does endorse the traditional role of cooperating associations, but then we become marginalized.
- There are two main models: a joint organization and two clearly separate organizations. The problem is when it is not clear which model applies.
- There hasn't been pressure from the top to make it work between cooperating associations and friends groups.
  - We don't want the government to tell us how to structure.
  - We do want superintendents to work this out with their non-profits.
- APPL's role is to:
  - Share information, and
  - Facilitate and communicate our unified voice.
- Almost all of this is about capacity development of your own organization.
  - Give us a couple years to get in a position to do more.

- I need help from APPL in this.
- Cooperating associations need to be well educated on DO21 and what it would mean to be fundraisers.
- Perhaps we can use the NPS language and assert that there needs to be a reinvestment in the partners that serve the NPS.
- We need to reinvent our own business model.
- We aren't as innovative as we could/should be in the next 10 years. What does the NPS mean by interpretation and education? There are too many "education" programs not worthy of the name.
- Where the challenge will be is in fees. What does the increase in fees mean for us? Will there be a backlash from the public on fees?
- Being in one place structurally with other non-profit partners will help us collaborate rather than compete.
  - The Partnership Office has a structure that feeds information to parks.
  - Competitively, we're at an enormous disadvantage reporting to Interpretation.
  - Is this structure or personality?
- We have expressed who we are with the IRS and the NPS through our missions. Where we are structurally doesn't change that.
- We have to have more recognition from the public to create more buy-in.
- Cooperating associations should be recognized the way Proud Partners are.
- People can donate to us instead of to the federal government.
  - But some of us aren't set up so people can give to us.
- We need to remind the NPS of our history, offer what we have been doing and say we want to do more.
  - We need to get them to think about us as a way to do other things before they start ginning up a new group.
  - We feel taken for granted. Familiarity breeds contempt. It's become an "us vs. them" thing.
  - We're in a position to reposition ourselves now.
- Stewardship becomes a hook. We can show that what we do is what stewardship looks like.

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**Identification of issues/opportunities to pursue in order for cooperating associations to be most effective in working with the NPS to achieve its goals, both overall and in the Centennial Initiative**

In small groups, participants identified possible issues or opportunities to develop strategies to pursue in order for cooperating associations to be most effective in working with the NPS to achieve its goals, both overall and in the Centennial Initiative.

Following is the brainstormed list, which was refined into the five topics described in Part A of these notes.

- ❖ Communication
  - To the NPS and back to us

- Rose Fennell as a contact point
- With willingness to listen
- Macro and micro
- Training
- Boards
- How cooperating associations fit into the Centennial Challenge
- Within NPS
- Within APPL
- With representation for cooperating associations in the Centennial Challenge
- ❖ Role definition
  - Involve all partners to self-define with NPS support
  - Equal respect for partners
  - Clarifying rules and enforcing them – leadership component
- ❖ Resources
  - Things from the NPS to help us do our job
- ❖ Structural fit of cooperating associations within the NPS
  - Move to Partnership Office
- ❖ Reposition selves with the NPS through Centennial Initiative
  - Affirmative message
  - Where we've come from, been and want to go
- ❖ APPL representation
  - Strengthen capacity to represent national park cooperating associations
- ❖ National branding strategy for cooperating associations and our role in parks
  - Include us in Centennial Challenge
- ❖ Is our role money or education?
  - Funding vs. program, or both?
  - How that relates to the Centennial Challenge
- ❖ Authorities
  - Director's Orders
  - Clarity of roles
  - Access to funds and when
  - How this relates to tapping into association resources
  - Competitive bidding
- ❖ Capacity development and investment
  - Reinvestment in park, NPS and partners
  - Succession planning – NPS and cooperating associations
  - Tie to training – selves and agency
- ❖ What do we want to look like in 2016?
  - Parks
  - Cooperating associations collectively as powerful partners
  - Association to support effectiveness
  - Unleash the power of our visitor contact

- ❖ Recognition of what we bring as full partners in achieving mission
- ❖ Models for partnership
  - How to change or collaborate effectively?