



Association of
PARTNERS
for Public Lands



GOVERNMENT RELATIONS STRATEGY





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The Association of Partners for Public Lands (APPL) is uniquely positioned to mobilize a network of authentic, trusted and economically important public lands advocates. Our nearly 100 member organizations serve more than 500 public lands and contribute over \$150 million annually to their preservation and visitor enrichment.

Our member organizations are found in all states and territories, and provide operational and interpretive support to every major federal land management agency. We are nonpartisan in our education and advocacy, and endeavor to share the significance of public lands and their constituents with leaders from every party and persuasion.



OUR PLATFORM

Public lands are a cornerstone of our nation's democracy, the health and education of its citizens and the vibrancy of its economy. They are home to America's most important biological, geological, ecological, historical and cultural sites, centers of recreation and drivers of tourism with nearly 1 billion visits annually.

There are few if any government programs that attract more public interest, engagement and participation—a phenomenon that leads to incredible benefits for tax payers. For example, every federal dollar invested in the National Park Service (NPS) generates ten dollars in economic

activity; outdoor recreation, which relies on robust public lands, has created over 6 million American jobs and yields over \$89 billion in tax revenue annually.

Yet the preservation and the enjoyment of these special places have never been solely achieved by the investments and efforts of government, but through the partnership of private citizens who value them. Today, individuals, foundations and corporations channel their support for public lands through memberships, retail purchases, donations, educational opportunities and volunteerism with those lands' nonprofit partners.





POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE VALUES

APPL believes it is essential to build and maintain public lands partners' capacity and to strengthen public-nonprofit partnerships by influencing public policy and legislation. The Association's positions are guided by these key ideas:

- Nonprofit organizations are critical to the health and vitality of public lands. Through partnerships, nonprofit organizations provide expertise and skills for constituency-building beyond what government alone can do.
- Nonprofit public lands partners are among the most influential voices to speak with decision-makers on behalf of public lands.
- An essential function of government is to responsibly fund the protection and management of our precious public lands. Such funding helps to maximize the potential partners can bring to bear in advancing the mission and purposes of these special places.
- The protection of our unique natural and historic resources is a universal American value. As a result, our members and stakeholders represent a broad cross-section of the political spectrum. We are nonpartisan in our education and advocacy, and endeavor to share the significance of public lands and their constituents with leaders from every party and persuasion.

LEADING THE CHARGE

APPL will assume a leadership role in educating agency leaders and elected officials about the value of nonprofit public land partnerships. We will advocate for policies and legislation that enhance the ability of nonprofit organizations and land management agencies to achieve their shared missions through partnership. We will seek out strategic partners in these efforts, recognizing the value of bringing like-minded stakeholders to help advance a common cause. APPL will adopt leadership roles in advancing these core objectives:

- Our laws, public policies and agreements should encourage strong public lands partnerships; those that are efficient in their management, effective in their operations and successful in their outcomes. Agency policy must facilitate and leverage the distinct resources, expertise and skills of nonprofit partner organizations. Efforts must be made to prioritize, simplify, and streamline the agreements, policies, and procedures that underlie partnership development, operations and management.
- Establishment of an esprit de corps among elected officials in support of public lands should be encouraged, resulting in advocacy among decision makers for public lands and these essential partnerships. Partners need champions in the Congress and the Administration who recognize their value in education, interpretation, philanthropy, advocacy, conservation, job creation and community engagement.



ENGAGING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

APPL will seek whenever possible to align with organizations, coalitions and agency partners on government relations initiatives that align or benefit public lands and their nonprofit partners, and specifically those that meet the following criteria:

- Government should provide the funding necessary to manage public lands for the benefit of current and future generations. Nonprofit partner organizations must be able to focus on funding their missions, not core government functions. Adequate public funding must be available to manage these treasures, promote conservation and the integrity of larger landscapes, and enable land managers to maintain strong relationships with nonprofit partner organizations.
- Public lands should be classrooms for all of our nation's citizens—from childhood through retirement—no matter their age or circumstance. As home to the most important biological, geological, ecological, historical and cultural sites in America, public lands and their partners offer unparalleled opportunities to teach and to learn. While America is becoming increasingly urban, there is likewise dramatic growth in the number of visitors to public lands, with some estimates showing in excess of 2 billion visits by 2060.
- Legislation and policy supporting public lands climate change adaptation planning and implementation. Whether impacted by extreme weather events, sea level rise,

ocean acidification, invasive species or other symptoms of global climate change, our public lands face unprecedented management challenges well into the future. APPL and its members can lend a vital voice to initiatives aimed at supporting public lands as they transition to a new climate paradigm.

MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

APPL member organizations are integral to creating and sustaining laws and policies that facilitate nonprofit-public partnerships. Nonprofit partners are unique in that they have both a deep, active understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing public lands, as well as strong connections to volunteers, members, donors and customers who care for these special places. Through intentional, frequent communication, APPL and its members have the opportunity to mobilize a powerful constituency to encourage policies and laws that fulfill our missions and support our values. This will be done by:

- Informing and educating the members regarding policy and legislative issues percolating in our nation's capital.
- Listening and surveying its members to identify common concerns and transmit them to elected officials and agency leaders, elevating individual voices into the greater voice of a national network of partner advocates.
- Engaging and mobilizing our broad constituency in support of policy and legislative changes that advance the missions of public lands.



ADVOCACY AGENDA: 2015-2016 PRIORITIES

STRENGTHENING AND ENHANCING AMERICA'S PUBLIC LANDS THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

America's public lands preserve some of the world's most important historical sites, are home to rich biodiversity and natural splendor and provide incalculable opportunities for education and recreation. From the Yosemite and Red Rock Canyon to Independence Hall and Lake Lanier, public lands are the anchors for regional and local economies, catalysts for tourism and centers of enjoyment and learning for families. With the federal government alone managing over 630 million acres and nearly 1 billion annual visitors, our public lands are beloved by American citizens of every political stripe.

Now, more than ever, nonprofit organizations are critical to the health and vitality of our public lands.

Through partnerships, nonprofit organizations provide critical funding, private sector expertise, and skills for constituency-building beyond what government alone can do—particularly in this time of stretched budgets.

APPL is committed to pursuing policies and legislative action that expand, strengthen and enhance the relationships between these special places and the nonprofit organizations dedicated to their protection and the enrichment of their visitors.

APPL will inform its members of actions necessary to effectively communicate these opportunities and needs to Congress and the Administration. Through these efforts, we will identify and support champions for public lands partnerships among elected officials and policy makers.

NATIONAL VOICE

Working closely with its member organizations, APPL will serve as a national voice for nonprofit public lands partners with the Congress and federal land management agencies to advance key issues.

PARTNERSHIP LAWS & POLICIES

APPL has identified key legislative and administrative policy changes that will help create a firmer foundation for the work of nonprofit park partners across federal land management agencies.

NPS Director's Order #21 on Donations and Fundraising: APPL was a key contributor to the National Park System Advisory Board's report, *Toward a New Era of Philanthropy and Partnerships*. The report asks the NPS to empower nonprofit partners to embrace greater responsibility for managing their fundraising operations and provides new tools to recognize donors.

APPL will lead the NPS nonprofit partner community to encourage adoption of a forward-looking Director's Order #21 that unleashes the full potential of park philanthropy. This effort has stalled for several years, and APPL is committed to helping the NPS adopt a new policy prior to the 2016 NPS Centennial.

NPS Reference Manual #32 on cooperating associations: NPS is currently revising its guidance for cooperating associations. In 2014, APPL wrote a white paper detailing specific ways to improve the partnership dynamic in retail sales, conform to law and policy regarding advocacy, and celebrate diverse forms of providing aid.

APPL strongly encourages the adoption of new cooperating association guidance prior to the 2016 NPS Centennial that provides greater respect for the unique roles and expertise of

both the NPS and cooperating associations in delivering interpretive publications and products to visitors.

Implementation of new Forest Service Partnership Agreements: In January 2014, Congress enacted a new authority for the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to work with cooperating associations through cooperative agreements. For many reasons, the implementation of this law with new template agreements and directives has been stalled.

APPL will work closely with the USFS to implement the new agreements and directives, and provide critical training and communications to USFS employees and nonprofit leaders to take advantage of this authority. With a sunset date in less than five years, APPL is committed to help the USFS begin to implement these new agreements in 2015 and to track the results to subsequently pursue a permanent authorization.

Paria River
Grand Staircase
Escalante-National
Monument





LEGISLATIVE

Partner Recognition: Although nonprofit organizations have been integral to the creation and success of America's public lands for over a century, federal law does not explicitly encourage federal land management agencies to develop the public-nonprofit partnerships exemplified by friends groups, cooperating associations and site-based educational institutes.

APPL is exploring new legislation that would recognize the unique role of nonprofit public lands partners in all federal land management agencies. Such legislation would also encourage agencies to partner with nonprofit organizations to the greatest extent possible.

Public-Private Construction: Current law does not easily permit federal land management agencies to leverage the nonprofit sector's expertise and capacities to construct mission-supporting facilities using private and public funds. Not only does this lead to inefficiencies and greater costs to taxpayers, but it also can negatively impact the relationships that nonprofit organizations have to their donors and supporters.

APPL supports legislation that clarifies the inherent public purpose in construction projects that enhance the visitor experience on public lands and encourages the use of public and private funds in ways that maximize efficiencies and reduce costs to taxpayers.

Cooperative Joint Management: For decades, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) joined with local not-for-profit organizations to cooperatively manage several recreational facilities. Cooperative joint management programs enabled these trusted and transparent nonprofit partners to reinvest fees collected for the maintenance and improvement of lakes and reservoirs. However, in September 2013, USACE was compelled to discontinue the program when it recognized a gap in its legislative authorities.

APPL encourages Congress to give the USACE an important tool to partner with nonprofit organizations and once again leverage limited federal funding. By enabling regular maintenance and operation through private support and enterprise, the Act prevents significant long-term costs and guarantees continued public access to facilities that taxpayers have paid to construct.



Harpers Ferry National Historic Site

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC LANDS

Nonprofit public lands partner organizations rely on the government to fund its core operations and to preserve the lands that have been entrusted to their care. APPL will support legislative measures that drive greater government funding to public lands—especially mechanisms that support enjoyment, services and accessibility for lands visitors.

VISITOR ENHANCEMENT FUNDING

Matching Funds: All five major federal land management agencies have challenge cost-share authorities, yet rarely has Congress appropriated funding to leverage private investment for targeted goals.

APPL strongly encourages Congress to incentivize private support for our public lands through their network of nonprofit partners through challenge cost-share opportunities. Specifically, APPL urges funding of the NPS Centennial Challenge at \$100 million annually from 2016 to 2020. Building on the implementation of the FY 2015 authorization, APPL will work with the NPS to use challenge cost-share to enhance and leverage success of the program.

Operations and Maintenance Funding: For years our national parks, wildlife refuges, forests and other public lands have fallen far behind in core funding for basic operations, ranging from visitor services to administration to habitat management. At the same time, our lands accumulate billions of dollars in maintenance backlogs for facilities, trails and equipment. While partners can help fill some gaps, they can't be expected to replace most central functions. These shortfalls in turn, have negatively affected the ability of public lands managers to fully engage partner organizations and achieve maximum benefit.

APPL will support organizations and coalitions that advocate for adequate operations and maintenance funding for our public lands.

Recreation Fees: The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) provides the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS), NPS and USFS to require fees from the users of public lands and reinvest those funds in the visitor experience of their land management systems. FLREA authority, and the almost \$400 million of annual funds tied to this law, is scheduled to expire in September 2016.

APPL will work with Congress to reauthorize FLREA for 10 years and enhance it by increasing transparency in the expenditure of fee, strengthening the connection between fee projects and the visitor experience, and including the USACE in the scope of its authority.

Transportation Funding: The maintenance backlog across federal land management agencies is tied to the inadequate upkeep of roads and bridges; for example, approximately \$6 billion of the NPS \$11.5 billion backlog is tied to transportation infrastructure. As federal lands do not have the benefit of local or state taxes to fund transportation projects, it is necessary for Congress to alleviate these obstacles to public lands access.

APPL believes Congress should increase targeted funding for public lands roads and bridges as part of the federal surface transportation reauthorization bill.



PROTECTING SPECIAL PLACES

Wildfire Funding: Propelled by a decade-long drought that has crippled the western U.S., the cost of suppressing wildfires has grown dramatically. Except for land management agencies, no other federal entities are burdened with having to completely fund disaster responses within their discretionary budgets. When Congress does not allocate enough funding for wildfires—as it has refused to do in recent years—dollars meant for recreation, education and wildfire prevention are diverted.

APPL endorses the bipartisan effort to develop wildfire emergency funding processes that are similar to those of other natural disaster disasters, like hurricanes, floods, and tornadoes.

Land and Water Conservation Fund: Created by Congress in 1965, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was established to safeguard natural areas, water resources and our cultural heritage and to provide recreation opportunities to all Americans. LWCF use revenues from the depletion of offshore oil and gas to support the conservation of land and water—including the acquisition of in-holdings and other threatened lands.

APPL supports the reauthorization of the LWCF and its clear focus on protecting critical habitat and scenic vistas, providing public access for recreation and preserving notable historic and cultural sites.



Sawtooth National Recreation Area



Point Reyes National Seashore

EXPANDING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Nonprofit partners offer unparalleled opportunities to educate Americans of every generation about our natural world, cultural landscapes and historic places through the experience of their public lands. APPL encourages funding and policies that empower education and learning on our public lands.

No Child Left Inside Act: This legislation would dedicate a small amount of federal grant money, distributed by the Education Department, for schools to train teachers and develop curriculum on environmental literacy.

APPL supports the passage of the No Child Left Inside Act, highlighting the value and necessity of environmental literacy in our nation.

Removing Obstacles to Residential Learning

Centers: For many educational partners of public lands who provide residential learning opportunities—especially partners of the NPS—leasing and concessions laws may create obstacles to operating a mission-based learning program that promises to build new generations of public lands stewards and advocates.

APPL supports legislative and policy adjustments to ensure nonprofit educational partners of public lands may operate meaningful and sustainable residential learning programs.

APPL ENCOURAGES ALL MEMBERS TO BECOME A VOICE ON BEHALF OF OUR PUBLIC LANDS. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO BECOME INVOLVED, GO TO WWW.APPL.ORG.



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