

National Park System Advisory Board 2013 Report

Task 8: Support the NPS Centennial Campaign

While national parks are greatly admired, opinion polling indicates that public awareness of the complexity and geographical extent of the National Park System is limited, as is understanding of the broad scope of community-focused programs the NPS administers. Over the past century, the National Park System has grown dramatically and the role of the NPS has greatly expanded. The NPS today has a significant educational and science research capacity and now collaborates extensively to promote stewardship with public and private institutions.

Addressing the Task

This work reflects a contemporary mission to help address societal challenges including climate change, the decline in cultural literacy, the obesity epidemic, and growing alienation between people and the natural world. The centennial of the NPS in 2016 is an opportunity to remind the public of the success, benefits, and values of the national park idea.

In June 2011 the NPS Director asked the NPSAB for advice in developing a communications initiative “to introduce more of the American people to all that the NPS has to offer looking to its second hundred years of public service.” The Director stated the effort should identify target audiences and offer an overarching theme or message that invites public understanding of the role the modern, 21st-century NPS plays in enriching the nation.

Progress Report

The NPSAB Centennial Campaign Committee considered possible actions and needed resources to develop and implement a centennial campaign. In November 2011 the NPSAB arranged meetings for the Director with four professional advertising/marketing firms to explore ideas about possible activities, content, and costs of a public information campaign. The Director spoke of the purposes of parks, described NPS programs, and stated that a campaign should emphasize the public benefits and values of the NPS mission.

From the beginning, it was agreed that congressional appropriations would not fund the campaign. Private sources, including foundations, individuals, and corporate sponsors would provide necessary support. The National Park Foundation (NPF) was considered the appropriate institution to receive donations for the initiative and to contract with an advertising/marketing firm to create and implement the campaign. In May 2012 the NPF Board made public its intent to help fund a campaign and to begin planning efforts. The NPSAB created a team to provide input to the Director on the selection of a firm to develop the effort. In July the Director, NPS senior leaders, and NPF and NPSAB representatives met with numerous advertising/marketing firms, which presented campaign proposals. Grey Advertising was selected to develop the centennial campaign.

Priorities Through 2016

The NPSAB will coordinate a newly established committee that will serve as a conduit to engage stakeholders in campaign activities. Next steps in centennial campaign development will involve directly the broad community of individuals and organizations that support the NPS mission.

Follow Our Work

Learn more about NPS centennial campaign planning efforts at www.nps.gov/resources/advisoryboardreport.htm. Follow the road to the NPS centennial at www.nps.gov.