

Rocky Mountain

National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior
Rocky Mountain National Park



Our National Parks Teacher Guide



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Rocky Mountain National Park

Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) is defined by the rugged Rocky Mountains that cut through the heart of the park from north to south. These mountains have shaped the landscape and created the conditions for the ecosystems we find within the park. Three of the park’s ecosystems, the montane, subalpine, and alpine tundra are delineated by elevation, with the montane ecosystem comprising the lowest elevations in the park (5,600 – 9,500 ft.) and the alpine tundra ecosystem comprising the highest elevations in the park (11,000 – 14,259 ft.). This fragile alpine tundra, which comprises 1/3 of the park, is one of the main scenic and scientific features for which the park was established and is one of the largest and best preserved examples of this ecosystem in the lower 48 states.

Environmental Education was formalized at RMNP with the inception of the Heart of the Rockies program in 1992. Our curriculum is built on the principles of RMNP’s founding father, Enos Mills. Mills felt children should be given the opportunity to explore and learn in the outdoors, for nature is the world’s greatest teacher, a belief that is kept alive today through every education program.

RMNP was established on January 26, 1915 through the efforts of local residents, especially Enos Mills, Abner Spague, and F.O. Stanley. Today the park covers 415 square miles of beautiful terrain, most of which is designated Wilderness.

*Lessons Written and Compiled By
Rocky Mountain National Park Environmental Education Staff*

Teacher Guide Created by Jean Marie Roth 10/2012; Updated by Katie Phillips 2/2013; Updated by Christie Wilkins 4/2021. All Photos are Copyright the National Park Service unless otherwise stated.

Teacher Guides

Teacher guides have been developed by the education staff at RMNP and each focuses on a topic of significance to the Park. These guides serve as an introductory resource to the topic and the information provided is used by park educators to develop curriculum-based education programs. Guides benefit teachers by providing the background information necessary to build a strong foundation for teaching students about specific park-related topics; they may also be used as a resource for preparing students for field trips to RMNP. Each guide contains a resources and references section to provide for more in-depth study.

Rocky Mountain National Park Education Program Goals

1. Increase accessibility to Rocky Mountain National Park for students from our gateway communities and under-served students who otherwise would not have the opportunity to visit the park.
2. Develop a variety of internal and external partnerships with other park operations, school districts, universities, professional educational organizations, agencies, friends groups, and various funding organizations.
3. Conduct workshops to train teachers to take a larger role in their students' experience at Rocky Mountain National Park.
4. Develop distance learning opportunities to serve students from outside our visiting area.

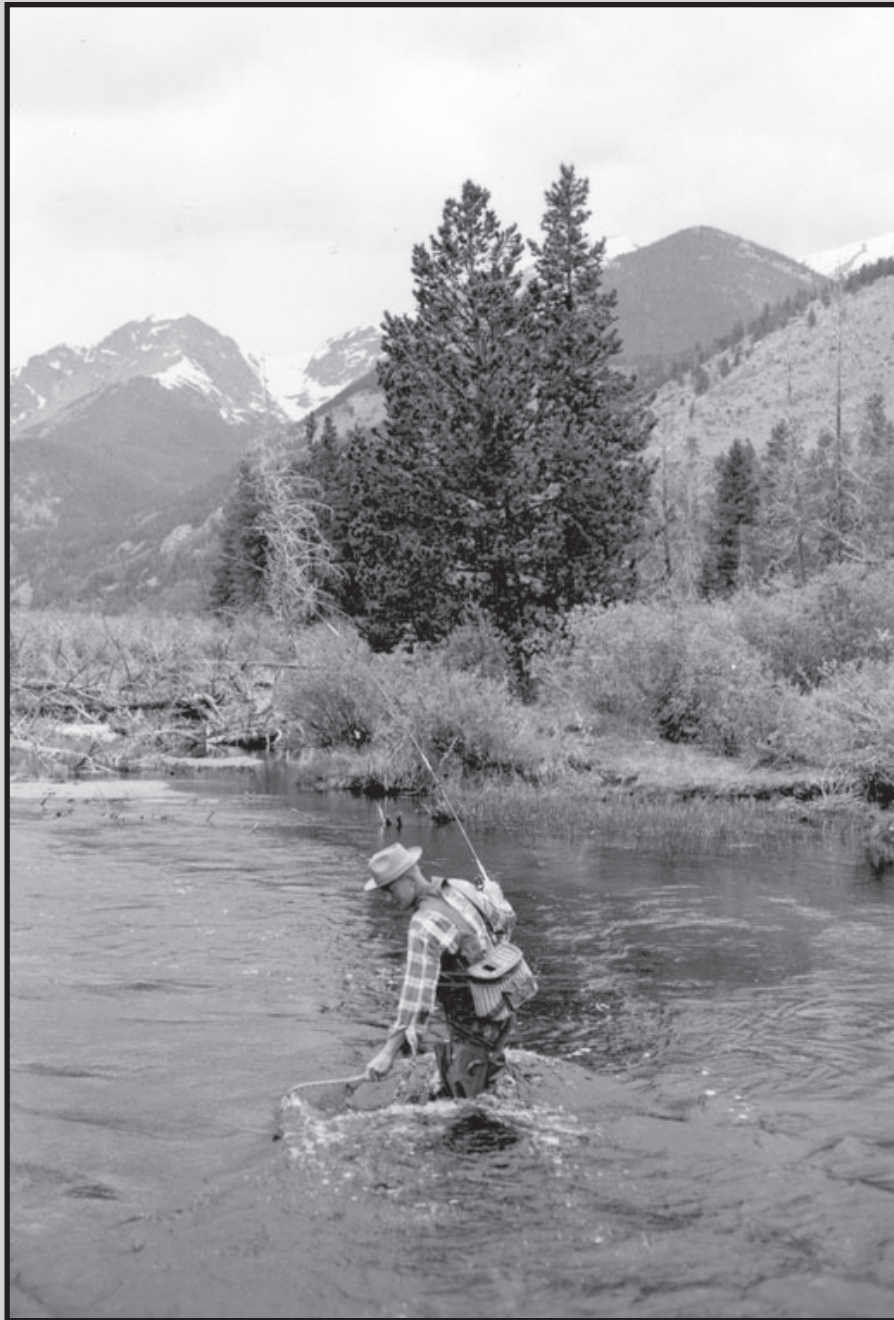
Schedule an Education Program with a Ranger

Field trips to national parks offer unique opportunities for studying and experiencing natural and cultural resources. Field trips are a great way to make abstract concepts from the classroom concrete. RMNP is an ideal outdoor classroom. It has a diversity of natural resources, easy spring and fall access, and is in close proximity to Front Range and Grand County communities.

Rocky Mountain National Park, like many national parks, offers ranger-led education programs. Heart of the Rockies, Rocky's education program, provides free field and classroom-based education programs, aligned to Colorado education standards. School groups should make reservations at least 6 months in advance. National Park entrance fee waivers may also be available for school visits. For further information or to schedule a program please contact Mark DeGregorio, Education Program Manager, at (970) 586-3777.

A variety of ranger-led education programs are offered seasonally. Programs in the spring and fall are generally similar focusing on a variety of park topics; programs in the winter are limited to snowshoeing programs and classroom programs focusing on winter. To see a list of the latest available programs please visit <http://www.nps.gov/romo/forteachers/planafielddtrip.htm>.

Our National Parks Background Information



Introduction

Today, roughly 60% of the more than 400 park areas administered by the National Park Service (NPS) have been set aside as symbols and evidence of American history and prehistory. Many of our natural parks contain historic places that represent important aspects of that history. Collectively, these places present an American history textbook, a textbook that educates us about the people, events, buildings, objects, landscapes, and artifacts of the American past and about the aspirations and actions that produced those tangible survivors. The historical richness of the National Park System and the opportunities it presents for understanding who we are, where we have been, and how we as a society move forward, are valuable as we approach the future. This collection of special places also allows us to examine our past—the contested along with the comfortable, the complex along with the simple, the controversial along with the inspirational.

“There is nothing so American as our national parks... The fundamental idea behind the parks... is that the country belongs to the people, that it is in process of making for the enrichment of the lives of all of us.”

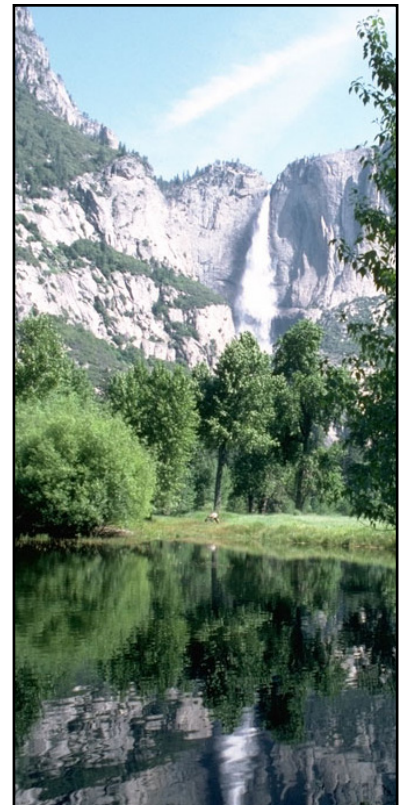
– President Franklin D. Roosevelt

National Parks are a uniquely American idea. National Parks in the United States are owned by the American people. In contrast, beautiful places and historical/cultural sites in other countries are often owned by individuals or individual families rather than the people of the country; although shortly after Yellowstone became America’s first national park in 1872, many other countries also started protecting significant places as national parks.

History of the National Park Service

The national park concept was partly realized in 1864, when Congress donated Yosemite Valley to California for preservation as a state park. Eight years later, in 1872, Congress reserved the spectacular Yellowstone country in the Wyoming and Montana territories “as a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.” With no state government there yet to receive and manage it, Yellowstone remained in the custody of the U.S. Department of the Interior as a national park—the world’s first area so designated.

Congress followed the Yellowstone precedent with other national parks in the 1890s and early 1900s, including Sequoia, Yosemite (to which California returned Yosemite Valley), Mount Rainier, Crater Lake, and Glacier. The idealistic impulse to preserve nature was often joined by the pragmatic desire to promote tourism: western railroads lobbied for many of the early parks and built grand rustic hotels in them to boost their passenger business.



Yosemite National Park.

The late nineteenth century also saw growing interest in preserving prehistoric ruins and artifacts on public lands. Congress first moved to protect such a feature, Arizona's Casa Grande Ruin, in 1892. In 1906 it created Mesa Verde National Park, containing dramatic cliff dwellings in southwestern Colorado, and passed the Antiquities Act authorizing presidents to set aside "historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest" in federal custody as national monuments. Theodore Roosevelt used the act to proclaim 18 national monuments before he



Mesa Verde National Park.

left the presidency. They included not only cultural features like El Morro, New Mexico, site of prehistoric petroglyphs and historic inscriptions, but natural features like Arizona's Petrified Forest and Grand Canyon. Congress later converted many of these natural monuments to national parks.

By 1916, the Interior Department was responsible for 14 national parks and 21 national monuments but had no organization to manage them. Interior secretaries had asked the Army to detail troops to Yellowstone and the California parks for this purpose. There, military engineers and cavalymen developed park roads and buildings, enforced regulations against hunting, grazing, timber cutting, and vandalism, and did their best to serve the visiting public.

"The parks do not belong to one state or to one section... The Yosemite, the Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon are national properties in which every citizen has a vested interest; they belong as much to the man of Massachusetts, of Michigan, of Florida, as they do to the people of California, of Wyoming, and of Arizona."

– Stephen Mather, NPS Director

Among those recognizing the problem was Stephen T. Mather, a wealthy and well-connected Chicago businessman who had visited Yosemite and was dissatisfied with the food and lodging. Mather wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Interior, Franklin Lane, expressing his complaints about his experience in Yosemite. Lane wrote back saying that if he did not like the way the parks were run then Mather could come to Washington and run them himself. Mather took Lane up on this offer and became the assistant to the Secretary of the Interior.

On August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson approved legislation creating the National Park Service within the Interior Department. The Organic Act made the bureau responsible for Interior's national parks and monuments.

The Organic Act (1916)

There is created in the Department of the Interior a service to be called the National Park Service, which shall be under the charge of a director who shall be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Director shall have substantial experience and demonstrated competence in land management and natural or cultural resource conservation. The Director shall select two Deputy Directors. The first Deputy Director shall have responsibility for National Park Service operations, and the second Deputy Director shall have responsibility for other programs assigned to the National Park Service.

There shall also be in said service such subordinate officers, clerks, and employees as may be appropriated for by Congress. The service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations hereinafter specified, except such as are under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Army, as provided by law, by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of the said parks, monuments, and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

Through the 1920s, the national park system was really a western park system. Only Acadia National Park in Maine lay east of the Mississippi. In 1926, Congress authorized Shenandoah, Great Smoky Mountains, and Mammoth Cave national parks in the Appalachian region.



Mammoth Cave National Park.

However, the Park Service's greatest opportunity in the east lay in another realm—that of history and historic sites. Congress had directed the War Department to preserve a number of historic battlefields, forts, and memorials there as national military parks and monuments, beginning in 1890, which later came under Park Service administration.

Mission of the National Park Service

The National Park Service preserves, unimpaired, the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration for this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

The World War II postwar era brought new pressures on the parks as the nation's energies were redirected to domestic pursuits. Conrad L. Wirth, a landscape architect and planner who had led the Park Service's Civilian Conservation Corps, better known as the CCC, program became director in December 1951.

Facing a park system with a deteriorating infrastructure

overwhelmed by the postwar travel boom, he responded with Mission 66, a ten-year, billion-dollar program to upgrade facilities, staffing, and resource management by the bureau's fiftieth anniversary in 1966.

Several new types of parks joined the system during the following years: Ozark National Scenic Riverways in Missouri, led to the acquisition of other free-flowing rivers; Pictured Rocks and Indiana Dunes became the first national lakeshores; The Appalachian National Scenic Trail spans multiple states, running some 2,000 miles from Maine to Georgia; and Gateway National Recreation Area in New York City and Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Francisco were precedents for other national recreation areas serving metropolitan areas.

In 1980, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act more than doubled the size of the national park system by adding over 47 million wilderness acres.

Today, the national park system is comprised of over 400 areas in nearly every state and U.S. possession. See Appendix A for a map of all the US National Parks. In addition to managing these parks-as diverse and far-flung as Hawaii Volcanoes National Park and the Statue of Liberty National Monument-the Park Service supports the preservation of natural and historic places and promotes outdoor recreation.



CCC Camp in RMNP.

National Park Service Designations

The numerous designations within the National Park System sometimes confuse visitors. The designations and names are created in the Congressional legislation authorizing the sites or by the president. Many names are descriptive—lakeshores, seashores, battlefields—but others cannot be neatly categorized because of the diversity of resources within them.

- National Park
- National Monument
- National Preserve
- National Historic Site
- National Historical Park
- National Battlefield
- National Cemetery
- National Recreation Area
- National Seashore
- National Lakeshore
- National River
- National Parkway
- National Trail

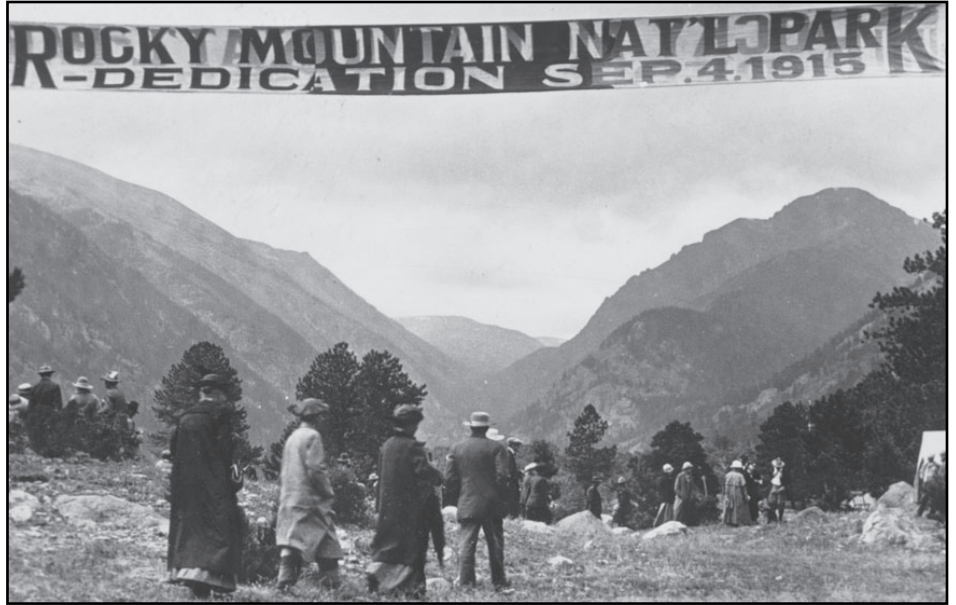
History of Rocky Mountain National Park

RMNP was established by President Woodrow Wilson's signature on January 25, 1915.

A dedication ceremony was held in Horseshoe Park on September 4, 1915. Although, the human history of the landscape started far earlier with evidence of human occupation for over 10,000 years through to the modern era. Many cultures have established themselves in the RMNP region.

Native Americans people, explorers, homesteaders, miners, hunters, and dude ranchers have all laid their claims

to the area at one time or another. Now the culture of the National Park Service, including visitation and management, adds another layer of human activity across the landscape.

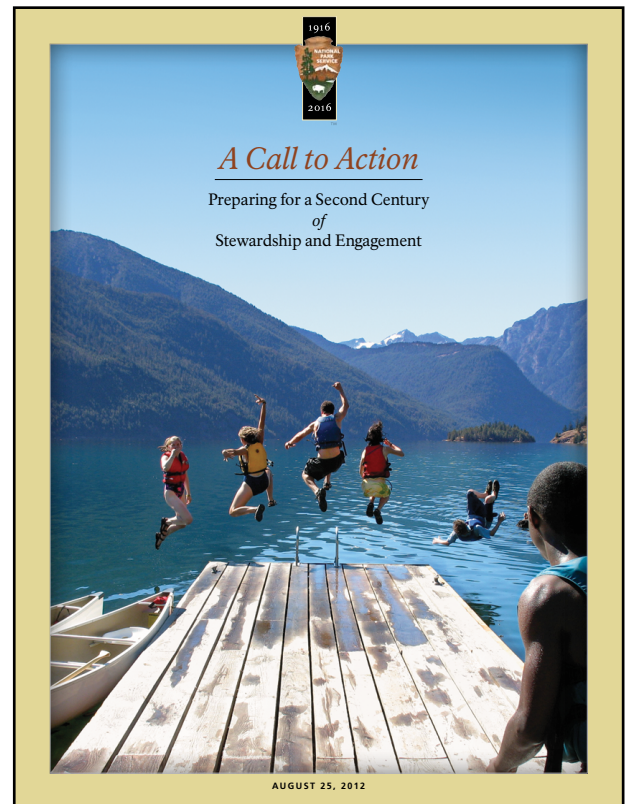


RMNP dedication ceremony.

Future of the National Park Service

The National Park Service entered a second century of existence in 2016. Leading up to the centennial, the National Park Service put forth *A Call to Action*. This *Call to Action* states that the National Park Service must recommit to the exemplary stewardship and public enjoyment of these places. National parks must continue to make contributions to society such as creating jobs, strengthening local economies, and support ecosystem services. The goals of this *Call to Action* are to connect people to parks, advance the education mission, preserve America's special places, and enhance professional and organizational excellence.

For more information on *A Call to Action*, please visit www.nps.gov/calltoaction.

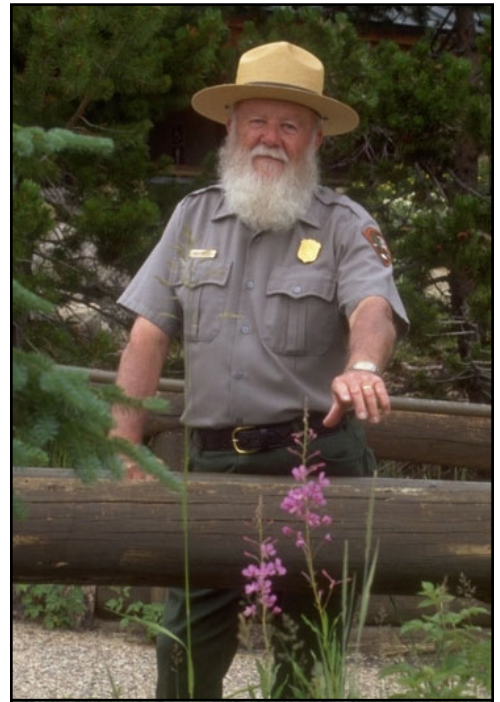


Park Rangers Today

The National Park Service is entrusted with administering approximately 85,000,000 acres of land throughout over 400 national park units in nearly all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Guam. The mission of the National Park Service is accomplished through a deeply committed workforce of approximately 20,000 employees (both permanent and temporary) and partnerships with nonprofit organizations, state and local governments, and private industries.

The employees of the NPS care for the special places that are the heritage of America. This work requires a wide range of skills in a variety of disciplines. The more than 20,000 National Park Service employees include:

- Administrative assistants
- Archeologists
- Automotive mechanics
- Backcountry rangers
- Botanists
- Carpenters
- Custodians
- Ecologists
- Electricians
- Engineers
- Equipment operators
- Facility managers
- Fee management specialists
- Finance officers
- Fire fighters
- Fish biologists
- Forestry technicians
- Gardeners
- Geologists
- Historians
- Human resources specialists
- Hydrologists
- Information management specialists
- Information technology specialists
- Interpretive rangers
- Landscape architects
- Maintenance mechanics
- Masons
- Museum professionals
- Park guides
- Park police
- Park rangers
- Public information officers
- Trails specialists
- Wilderness coordinators
- Wildlife biologists



Our National Parks Resources



Classroom Book List

These books are not endorsed by the National Park Service. They are intended to serve as classroom resources for students. Please be sure to preview books to ensure that they are appropriate for your classroom. This list is by no means inclusive of every book available on the topic.

Elementary Level Books

The camping trip that changed America by Barb Rosenstock

Camping with the President by Ginger Wadsworth

Discover National Monuments: National Parks (Discover Your World) by Cynthia Light Brown and Blair Shedd

“Hey Ranger!” Kids Ask Questions About RMNP by Kim Justesen & Judy Newhouse

John Muir By Thomas Locker

Kids National Parks Guide U.S.A.: The Most Amazing Sights, Scenes, and Cool Activities from Coast to Coast! by National Geographic

National Parks: A Kid’s Guide to America’s Parks, Monuments, and Landmarks by Erin McHugh & Neal Aspinall

Our National Parks by Lucia Raatma

Rocky Mountain National Park by David Peterson

Rocky Mountain National Park by John Hamilton

Rocky Mountain National Park by Mike Graf

Who Pooped in the Park? Scat and Tracks for Kids by Gary Robson

High School Level Books

Exploring Careers in the National Parks by Robert Gartner

It Happened in Rocky Mountain National Park by Phyllis J. Perry

The Making of the National Parks by Jimmy Carter

Museums, Monuments, and National Parks: Toward a New Genealogy of Public History by Denise D. Meringolo

The National Parks : America’s Best Idea by Dayton Duncan and Ken Burns

National Parks: The American Experience by Alfred Runte

National Park Ranger : an American Icon by Charles R. Farabee Jr.

National Park Service: The Story Behind the Scenery by Horace M. Albright

Rocky Mountain National Park by Don Laine

Rocky Mountain National Park Natural History Handbook by John Carl Emerick

So you want to become a park ranger? by Richard Boyer

Glossary

Conserve – to use or manage (natural resources) wisely

Ecology – the study of relationships between living organisms and their environment

Ecosystem – a system formed by the interaction of a community of organisms with their environment

Environment – the air, water, minerals, organisms, and all other external factors surrounding and affecting a given organism at any time; external conditions or surroundings, especially those in which people live or work

Memorial – something designed to preserve the memory of a person or event as a monument or a holiday

National – of, pertaining to, or maintained by a nation as an organized whole or independent political unit; peculiar or common to the whole people of a country

Naturalist – a person who has expertise in natural history especially botany or zoology; one who studies plants and animals

Nature – the phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape, and other features of the earth, as opposed to humans or human creations

Preserve – to keep alive or in existence; to make lasting; to protect

Ranger – an official in charge of a forest, park, estate, nature reserve, etc. Diverse ranger positions exist from law enforcement to education to wildlife biologists.

Wilderness – a tract of land officially designated as a wild and uncultivated region uninhabited or inhabited only by wild animals and protected as such by the US government

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Appendix A - Map of U.S. National Parks

