

Climate Friendly Parks



More than 250 million people visit national parks every year. Park visitors are generally inclined to care about the environment, and parks provide a superb natural setting for motivating people to do more. If each visitor took away a key message about climate change and how he or she can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the impact would be significant.

Recognizing the value of the parks to educate visitors and catalyze change, the National Park Service has established a partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to make the national parks models of climate stewardship and education.

Through its Climate Friendly Parks program the National Park Service seeks to:

- Educate every park employee about climate change and air pollution and the role each person can take in addressing the problem;
- Identify a strategy for each Climate Friendly Park to reduce its emissions of greenhouse gases and air pollutants in order to help mitigate the effects of climate change and air pollution; and

- Communicate to the public how climate change and air pollution affect their park's natural resources, how the park is dealing with these effects, and how individuals can be stewards of our climate and other natural resources.

Climate change is perhaps the most far-reaching and irreversible threat the National Park System has ever faced. Recognizing Americans' strong desire to preserve and protect our national parks for present and future generations, National Parks Conservation Association is partnering with NPS to help implement and expand its Climate Friendly Parks program. NPCA believes this program can play a critical role in helping park visitors understand the causes and consequences of climate change. Even more important, Climate Friendly Parks can inspire park visitors and supporters to reduce the climate change threats by making changes in their personal lives, and by demanding stronger leadership from their local, state, and federal policymakers.

CLIMATE FRIENDLY PARKS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

To date ten national parks participating in the Climate Friendly Parks program have completed climate action plans. Here are just a few examples of what some of these parks are doing to make a difference.

Everglades National Park performed an inventory of its greenhouse gas emissions in 2004 and discovered that almost one-third of the park's emissions come from transportation, primarily visitor vehicles. Park staff have since committed to a range of actions, including operating visitor shuttles, encouraging the use of bicycles and non-motorized boats, increasing the fuel efficiency of park marine and automotive fleets, rewarding contractors who run more than half of their vehicles on alternative fuels, and educating employees on climate-friendly actions they can take in their area of control (CFP 2005).

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area in Pennsylvania and New Jersey has committed to reducing its fuel consumption by 15 percent over three years, and will perform energy audits with the goal of decreasing energy demand by 25 percent.

Gateway National Recreation Area in New York and New Jersey is adopting new grounds management practices to reduce emissions, including identifying areas where wildlife could benefit from limited mowing, planting trees in unused lots, and designing parking lots to enhance vegetation.

Glacier Bay National Park in Alaska found that marine vessels account for 97 percent of its greenhouse gas emissions, and more than half comes from cruise ships. The park is now changing criteria for awarding cruise ship contracts to favor those committed to reducing emissions.

Zion National Park in Utah has undertaken numerous projects to reduce its "environmental footprint," from buying environmentally preferable materials and recycling to obtaining alternative transportation means for park employees and using renewable fuels in its vehicles. According to park superintendent Jock Whitworth, however, "most important are the education and outreach efforts that reflect the passion of both the park and a model gateway community committed to stewardship."





INDIVIDUALS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Hon. Laurence William “Bill” Lane, Jr., has had a long and distinguished career — Navy Lieutenant during World War II, advisor to several California governors and U.S. presidents, U.S. Ambassador to Australia, and Ambassador-at-Large in Japan are just a few highlights. But while he has worn many hats over the years, Bill’s love for our national parks and other wild lands is the common thread that ties together many of his diverse pursuits. He was Chairman of the Presidential Commission for the Centennial of the National Parks and is an honorary NPS ranger. As the publisher of *Sunset Magazine*, Bill shared his enthusiasm for the parks with millions of Americans, many of whom made their first visit to a national park because of one of many articles they read in *Sunset Magazine* and Books.

In recent years, Bill has grown increasingly concerned about the effects of global warming on our national parks. He knows the parks intimately from his days as a mountain guide in Sequoia and Yosemite National Parks, and he sees

how climate change is diminishing these treasured places. Through his work as an advisor to many conservation, civic, and business organizations, Bill has helped others understand global warming and its consequences for our environment.

As a former publisher, Bill also understands the power of the parks to educate and inspire individuals. Helping people understand what is at stake and what they can do about it are critical first steps in preventing global warming from inflicting irreversible damage on the parks Bill has fought to protect. That is why Bill and his wife Jean have made a substantial financial commitment to help NPCA educate park visitors and supporters — especially young people — about climate change, how it affects the western national parks, and what we can all do to protect them. Solving an issue as big and complex as global warming may well take a generation’s worth of effort. The gift from Bill and Jean will help ensure that the next generation of park supporters will be equipped for the task and motivated to act.

COMPANIES MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Xanterra Parks & Resorts, which operates lodges, restaurants, and other concessions in 11 national parks, has committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions to 10 percent below 2000 levels by 2015. At six national parks, half of Xanterra's electricity now comes from wind power. Two employee houses at **Yellowstone National Park** get up to 40 percent of their power from solar panels. The company has increased vehicle fuel efficiency, begun using more biodiesel, reduced fuel oil usage, upgraded the efficiency of appliances, and installed countless energy-saving control systems. As a result of such initiatives, Xanterra is almost halfway to its emissions reduction goal without compromising the quality of service it provides. Says Chris Lane, vice president of environmental affairs, "As a company working in some of the most beautiful places on Earth...Xanterra knows it has a primary responsibility to help protect these natural treasures from global warming."

