

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Democratic Candidates, Campaigns, And Consultants
FROM: Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc.
DATE: May 23, 2008
RE: Recent National Survey

Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc., and McLaughlin & Associates conducted a national survey among 1,213 likely general election voters on February 15 to 24, 2008. The interviews were conducted on-line and via telephone by professional interviewers. The national survey of 1,213 likely general election voters has an accuracy of ± 2.8 percentage points at the 95% confidence interval. In addition, Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc., conducted two focus groups in Denver, CO, on April 13, 2008. The first group comprised 10 swing voters with a college education or higher and the second group comprised 10 voters who said they actively would support a pro-parks campaign.

Key Points From The Research

- The national parks are a broadening issue that appeals to voters across the electorate.
- The research shows strong public support for national parks and pro-parks candidates.
 - Better than four in five voters believe that it is important for the federal government to protect and support national parks and national historic places.
 - Voters are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports protecting and preserving our national parks. Three in four (76%) voters say they would be more likely to support a presidential candidate who has a strong commitment to protecting our national parks.
- Being pro-parks is a significant indicator not just of a candidate's position on the environment, but also of other qualities that voters expect a candidate to have.
- The Centennial of the National Park System in 2016 is a good organizing principle. Having the parks restored and ready for the next 100 years is a goal that voters support.

Part I: The Data

2008 Presidential Election

At the time of this poll, the political environment favored the Democratic candidate in this year's presidential election. Overall, a generic Democratic candidate (49%) had a 15-point advantage over the Republican candidate (34%) on the generic ballot for president. The Democratic candidate (92%) retained a slightly higher proportion of the partisan base than the Republican candidate (85%), and independent voters favored the Democratic candidate by nearly two to one (37% to 19%). However, a plurality of independents (43%) remained undecided and up for grabs.

In this November's election for president do you think you will vote for the Democratic candidate or for the Republican candidate, or is it too soon for you to say? (IF "TOO SOON," ASK:) Well, all other things being equal, would you lean more toward voting for the Democrat or for the Republican in this year's presidential election?

	<u>All</u>			
	<u>Voters</u>	<u>Rep.</u>	<u>Dem.</u>	<u>Ind.</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Democratic candidate	49	4	92	37
Republican candidate	34	85	1	19
Too soon to say, no leaning	11	9	6	26
Other	1	0	0	3
Not sure	5	1	1	14

Important Qualities Of The Next President

Democrats asked to rate important qualities of the next president on a scale of one to 100 say that it is important for the next president to be someone who "is forward looking and thinks about the future" (86.3), "will restore America's reputation in the world" (84.9), "is a good steward for our nation's resources" (82.8), and "focuses on issues that unify the country" (82.6). Democratic voters believe that a candidate who puts a strong priority on protecting our national parks would have these qualities. Nearly nine in 10 Democrats think a pro-parks candidate would be forward-looking (88%), a good steward for our nation's resources (87%), and 85% of Democrats think that a pro-parks candidate would restore America's reputation in the world. Strong majorities of Democrats also believe that a pro-parks candidate would "protect our heritage for future generations" (84%) and focus on "issues that unify the country" (71%). Democrats rank being pro-environment as an important quality for the next president (79.2 on a scale of one to 100), and they view putting a strong priority on protecting the national parks as pro-environment (84%).

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Like Democrats, independent voters say on a one-to-100 scale that it is important for the next president to be someone who is forward looking and thinks about the future (81.6), someone who will restore America's reputation in the world (82.0), and a good steward for the nation's resources (79.9). Eight in 10 independents think that a candidate who puts a strong priority on protecting our national parks will be someone who is forward looking and thinks about the future (81%) and is a good steward for the nation's resources (78%). Independents say that it also is important for the next president to be "pro-environment" (70.4 on a one-to-100 scale) and they are more likely to view a candidate who puts a strong priority on protecting national parks as pro-environment (78%). However, independents are less likely than Democrats to connect supporting the parks with restoring America's reputation in the world (59%).

Let me read you a series of different words to describe qualities in people who might become president. Using a scale from one to 100, on which a one means not important at all and 100 means extremely important, please rate how important it is to you personally for our next president to be each of the following. You may choose any number from one to 100 depending on how you feel.

	Mean Rating			
	<u>All Voters</u>	<u>Dem.</u>	<u>Ind.</u>	<u>Rep.</u>
Someone who is forward looking and thinks about the future	84.4	86.3	81.6	82.8
Someone who will restore America's reputation in the world	80.3	84.9	82.0	72.9
Someone who is a good steward for our nation's resources	80.1	82.8	79.9	76.8
Someone who focuses on issues that unify the country	80.1	82.6	80.5	76.4
Someone who will protect our heritage for future generations	80.4	80.9	78.4	80.8
Someone who is pro-environment	70.9	79.2	70.4	60.2
Someone who understands what makes America special	79.3	78.9	74.4	81.6
Someone who is patriotic	81.9	78.1	78.5	87.6

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How likely do you think it is that a candidate who puts a strong priority on protecting our national parks would be **(READ ITEM)**—very likely, fairly likely, just somewhat likely, or not that likely?

	Very/Fairly Likely			
	All			
	<u>Voters</u>	<u>Dem.</u>	<u>Ind.</u>	<u>Rep.</u>
	%	%	%	%
Someone who is forward looking and thinks about the future	80	88	81	71
Someone who is a good steward for our nation's resources	80	87	78	74
Someone who will protect our heritage for future generations	79	84	75	75
Someone who is pro-environment	78	84	78	71
Someone who understands what makes America special	71	78	62	67
Someone who focuses on issues that unify the country	63	71	56	57
Someone who will restore America's reputation in the world	61	71	59	50
Someone who is patriotic	67	68	58	68

Candidates And National Parks

A large majority of both Democrats (75%) and independents (64%) are very or fairly interested in learning about a candidate's stands and positions on the issue of protecting our national parks. More than eight in 10 (82%) Democrats and three-quarters (74%) of independents are more likely to support a candidate who has a strong commitment to protecting our national parks.

How interested would you say you are in learning what a candidate's stands and positions are on the issue of protecting our national parks?

	All			
	<u>Voters</u>	<u>Dem.</u>	<u>Ind.</u>	<u>Rep.</u>
	%	%	%	%
Very interested	37	44	40	25
Fairly interested	28	31	24	29
Just somewhat interested	23	19	22	27
Not that interested	12	6	14	19
Not sure	0	0	0	0
Very/fairly interested	65	75	64	54
Somewhat/not interested	35	25	36	46

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Now let me read you some things you might learn about a candidate for president. For each one, please tell me whether knowing this would make you much more likely, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, or much less likely to support a candidate for president. If it would not make a difference either way, please just let me know.

	More Likely			
	All Voters	Dem.	Ind.	Rep.
	%	%	%	%
The candidate is a strong environmentalist	69	83	74	50
The candidate has a strong commitment to fighting global warming	67	83	69	47
The candidate has a strong commitment to protecting our national parks	76	82	74	71
The candidate pledges to increase funding for roads, highways, and bridges	69	76	67	63
The candidate pledges never to raise taxes as president	59	58	49	69

At the end of the survey, voters reiterate that there virtually is no downside to a presidential candidate supporting the national parks. Knowing that a candidate has a strong commitment to protecting national parks and important historic places makes 86% of Democrats and 77% of independents more likely to support that candidate. Forty-one percent of Democratic voters say they would be much more likely to support a candidate who is strongly committed to our national parks. Hardly any voters (2% Democrat, 5% independent) are less likely to support this candidate.

There also is broad support for a campaign to build support for pro-parks policies. Four in 10 (44%) Democrats and independents (42%) say they actively would support a national campaign to build support for policies to protect the national parks. This is a higher percentage of active support than we have measured for other similar types of campaigns. Another 51% of Democrats and 50% of independents would not take any direct action on behalf of the national parks, but agree with the campaign's goals. Here too, very few voters (3% Democrats, 6% independent) disagree with the goals of the campaign.

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Based on everything you have heard throughout this survey, would knowing that a candidate has a strong commitment to protecting national parks and important historic places in America make you much more likely, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, or much less likely to support a candidate for president, or would it not make a difference either way?

	All			
	<u>Voters</u>	<u>Dem.</u>	<u>Ind.</u>	<u>Rep.</u>
	%	%	%	%
Much more likely	33	41	32	23
Somewhat more likely	46	45	44	50
Somewhat less likely	2	1	4	3
Much less likely	1	1	1	1
No difference	17	12	17	23
Not sure	1	0	2	0
More likely	79	86	77	73
Less likely	4	2	5	5

*Suppose there were a national campaign to build support for policies to protect our national parks. The campaign would recruit volunteers to participate in grassroots efforts to promote the importance of this issue and would ask presidential candidates from both parties to commit to providing needed funding to the parks and to support clean air legislation. Realistically speaking, how likely would you be to get involved with this campaign--would you say you would most likely **(A)** actively support the campaign, either volunteering your time or contributing money, **(B)** agree with the goals of the campaign but not take any action, or **(C)** disagree with the goals of the campaign?*

	All			
	<u>Voters</u>	<u>Dem.</u>	<u>Ind.</u>	<u>Rep.</u>
	%	%	%	%
Actively support	37	44	42	27
Agree with goals /not take action	53	51	50	58
Disagree with goals	7	3	6	12
Not sure	3	2	2	3

Importance Of Protecting National Parks

Nine in 10 (88%) Democrats and eight in 10 (79%) independents think it is extremely or quite important for the federal government to protect and support the major national parks such as Yellowstone National Park, Grand Canyon National Park, and the Everglades National Park. Among Democratic voters, nearly two-thirds (64%) say it is extremely important for the government to protect and support these parks and about half (49%) of independent voters agree. Similarly, 87% of Democrats and 81% of independent voters think it is extremely or quite important for the federal government to protect and support historic places and monuments that are part of the National Park System such as Gettysburg National Battlefield, the Statue of Liberty, and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

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When you think about the major national parks such as Yellowstone National Park, Grand Canyon National Park, and the Everglades National Park, how important do you think it is for the federal government to protect and support those parks—extremely important, quite important, somewhat important, not that important, or not important at all?

	All			
	<u>Voters</u>	<u>Dem.</u>	<u>Ind.</u>	<u>Rep.</u>
	%	%	%	%
Extremely important	55	64	49	44
Quite important	28	24	30	32
Somewhat important	15	10	19	20
Not that important	1	1	1	2
Not important at all	1	1	1	1
Not sure	0	0	0	1
Extremely/quite important	82	88	79	76
Somewhat/not important	17	12	21	23

And when you think about the historic places and monuments that are part of the National Park System, such as Gettysburg National Battlefield, the Statue of Liberty, or Golden Gate National Recreation Area, how important do you think it is for the federal government to protect and support those historic places and monuments—extremely important, quite important, somewhat important, not that important, or not important at all?

	All			
	<u>Voters</u>	<u>Dem.</u>	<u>Ind.</u>	<u>Rep.</u>
	%	%	%	%
Extremely important	53	59	45	47
Quite important	31	28	36	34
Somewhat important	14	11	17	17
Not that important	1	1	1	1
Not important at all	1	1	1	0
Not sure	0	0	0	1
Extremely/quite important	84	87	81	81
Somewhat/not important	15	13	18	19

Specific Priorities Within The Parks

Nine in 10 (92%) Democrats and a similar proportion (86%) of independents think that it should be a very or somewhat high priority for the government to work on ensuring that we protect and preserve animal and plant life within national parks such as Yellowstone, the Everglades, and the Grand Canyon so that the animal and plant species survive for future generations. Nearly the same proportion of Democrats (90%) and independents (86%) think that requiring power plants to use the best available pollution-control technology to reduce air pollution in the national parks should be a high priority. High proportions of Democrats (87%) and independents (81%) agree that it

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should be a priority for the government to make sure national parks have a reliable and sustainable source of funding, both now and in the future.

Now I would like to read you some different goals for government on dealing with protecting our national parks and historic places in America. For each one, please tell me whether this should be a very high priority, somewhat high priority, just somewhat of a priority, not much of a priority, or not a priority at all for the government to work on.

	Priority Level		
	Very High %	Somewhat High %	Total %
Ensure that we preserve and protect animal and plant life within national parks such as Yellowstone, the Everglades, and Grand Canyon, so the animal and plant species survive for future generations			
All voters	60	28	88
Democrats	63	29	92
Independents	55	31	86
Republicans	55	27	82
Require that power plants use the best available pollution control technology to reduce air pollution in our national parks			
All voters	60	22	82
Democrats	72	18	90
Independents	63	23	86
Republicans	47	28	75
Make sure that America's national parks have a reliable and sustainable source of funding, both now and in the future			
All voters	50	29	79
Democrats	57	30	87
Independents	52	29	81
Republicans	41	28	69
Protect existing parks by buying private land within the parks as it comes on the market to prevent it from being sold to private developers			
All voters	53	24	77
Democrats	59	26	85
Independents	59	22	81
Republicans	42	24	66

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<i>(Continued)</i>	Priority Level		
	<u>Very High</u>	<u>Somewhat High</u>	<u>Total</u>
	%	%	%
Increase accessibility and encourage learning in the parks by ensuring that there are adequate numbers of park rangers and educational staff in the parks			
All voters	47	31	78
Democrats	50	33	83
Independents	43	30	73
Republicans	45	31	76
Upgrade technology in the parks so that interpretive rangers, law enforcement, and park planners are using the latest tools and technology to educate and protect park visitors			
All voters	36	37	73
Democrats	43	36	79
Independents	27	41	68
Republicans	29	36	65
Improve transportation within parks by fixing roads and bridges and maintaining pedestrian and bike trails, so the parks are accessible to visitors			
All voters	37	38	75
Democrats	43	34	77
Independents	27	43	70
Republicans	31	41	72
Conduct scientific research to inform decisions about park protection so that these decisions can be based on science as much as possible			
All voters	35	31	66
Democrats	42	34	76
Independents	35	25	60
Republicans	26	29	55
Invest in new park sites to ensure that the National Park System continues to grow and evolve to represent nationally significant landscapes, ecosystems, and the full diversity of American history and culture			
All voters	31	34	65
Democrats	43	32	75
Independents	15	33	48
Republicans	20	35	55

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Parks Proposals

The survey tested several proposals to help protect national parks. The highest-testing proposals focus on protecting plant and animal life, adequately funding parks, and access to parks. Voters are very concerned with the problems caused by inadequate staffing, particularly when it results in decreased access for visitors and school groups especially. Proposals to address this problem of access due to inadequate staffing are well received.

Now I'm going to mention some proposals that people have suggested to help protect National Parks. For each one, please tell me whether your reaction is very favorable, somewhat favorable, neutral, or unfavorable.

	Very Favorable			
	<u>All</u> <u>Voters</u> %	<u>Dem.</u> %	<u>Ind.</u> %	<u>Rep.</u> %
Make environmental protection a priority to prevent the extinction of plants and animals	60	71	59	47
Make sure that historical sites that are a part of the National Park System, such as the Statue of Liberty and Gettysburg Battlefield Park, are adequately staffed so schools and students can experience our nation's history for themselves	64	68	64	59
Make sure that adequate funding is available for park maintenance so that small projects will not be put off and become large, expensive problems	60	66	63	50
Require that parks be adequately staffed so that they can remain open and accessible to visitors	56	64	51	49
Address critical maintenance that has been put off in national parks to stop the decline of park infrastructure	56	63	56	50
Make funds available for park completion and expansion so that when real estate within park boundaries or a historically significant site comes up for sale, parks can afford to acquire that land	48	57	47	37

A Timeframe For Implementing Proposals

In 2016, the National Park System will be 100 years old and the upcoming National Park Service centennial is a popular organizing principle that voters support. Strong majorities of Democrats (86%) and independents (79%) think it is a very or fairly important goal for the next president to ensure that parks are fully restored and ready to serve the country for another 100 years by the National Park System's centennial in 2016.

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Our National Park System will be 100 years old in 2016, just eight years from now. How important a goal is it for the next president to ensure that parks are fully restored and ready to serve the country for another hundred years by the National Park System's centennial in 2016—a very important goal, a fairly important goal, just a somewhat important goal, or not that important a goal?

	All			
	Voters	Dem.	Ind.	Rep.
	%	%	%	%
Very important goal	49	59	46	37
Fairly important goal	31	27	33	35
Just a somewhat important goal	16	11	16	22
Not that important a goal	4	3	5	6
Not sure	0	0	0	0
Very/fairly important	79	86	79	72
Somewhat/not important	20	14	21	28

Themes And Framing Statements

When it comes to reasons why it is important to protect our national parks, several themes consistently resonate with voters. The beauty of the parks, preserving the parks for our children, and the importance of the parks as a refuge for plant and animal life are themes that repeatedly test strongly with voters throughout the survey. Framing statements about these themes are especially effective when they include language about the value of the national parks as national treasures and that national parks are the legacy we leave our children.

A strong majority of Democrats (77%) and independents (68%) think it is very important to protect the national parks because “they provide us with some of the most beautiful, majestic, and awe-inspiring places on earth.” Similarly, 76% of Democrats and 68% of independents believe it is very important to protect the national parks because “they should be honored, cherished, and cared for, and not left to crumble in disrepair.” Additionally, seven in 10 (68%) Democrats and six in 10 (58%) independents think it is very important because “the national parks are the legacy we leave our children.” A majority of Democrats (71%) and independents (54%) also think that protecting plant and animal habitats are very important reasons to protect our national parks.

Of the reasons why protecting the national parks should be a top priority for the next president, seven in 10 (70%) Democrats and six in 10 (62%) independents think the most convincing reason is that the national parks are a legacy we leave our children.

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Now I'm going to read you some reasons why people have said that it is important to protect our national parks. Please tell me how important each of the following reasons is to support our national parks--a very important reason, fairly important reason, just somewhat important reason, or not that important a reason.

	Very Important			
	<u>All</u> <u>Voters</u> %	<u>Dem.</u> %	<u>Ind.</u> %	<u>Rep.</u> %
National parks provide us with some of the most beautiful, majestic, and awe-inspiring places on earth	70	77	68	63
National parks should be honored, cherished, and cared for, not left to crumble into disrepair	68	76	68	61
National parks provide a home for America's diverse populations of plants and animals	60	71	54	46
They are the legacy we leave our children	64	68	58	61
National parks can be used to excite America's youth about learning. They are classrooms for teaching the next generation about science, math, civics, and American history	59	66	58	51
By attracting visitors from all over the country and all over the world, national parks bring billions of dollars in economic benefits from tourism to regions with national parks	57	60	60	54
They are extended backyards for generations of American families where many families have special experiences and take away lasting memories	54	60	56	48
It is difficult, if not impossible, to fix our national parklands once they are damaged	51	59	47	43
They are beacons of democracy and places where Americans of all races, creeds, colors, religious heritage, and party affiliation come together in a common purpose	44	53	35	34
They are routes to a healthier lifestyle	37	47	28	27
They are gathering places for local communities and contributors to civic awareness and responsibility	39	44	38	33

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Getting near the end of the survey, I'd like to read you several reasons that people have given for why protecting our national parks should be a top priority for the next president. Please tell me how convincing each of the following reasons is to support our national parks--very convincing, fairly convincing, just somewhat convincing, or not at all convincing?

	Very Convincing Reason			
	All <u>Voters</u> %	<u>Dem.</u> %	<u>Ind.</u> %	<u>Rep.</u> %
Our National Parks are the legacy we leave our children. It is our responsibility to protect our parks now so that our children and their children can enjoy the beauty of our parks, learn about nature, and visit historical places within our park system just like we did when we were children	64	70	62	58
Our National Parks are the face of America. They are showplaces for our nation's triumphs that honor our past, but also places of sorrow that commemorate fallen soldiers and document some of our nation's greatest mistakes, such as the Trail of Tears	53	57	51	50
Our National Park System was the first National Park System in the world and many have called it "America's Best Idea." Visited by three million people every year, our National Parks have been a great success and the system is used as a model for other countries	46	53	41	40
At a time when change is high on the national agenda, it is equally important to remember where we came from and who we are as Americans. We only need to look to our National Parks to see examples of our nation's intertwined past, present, and future. Our parks are places that connect us and shape our national identity	46	52	42	42

Part 2: Why Democrats Should Talk About The Parks And How To Do It Effectively

Democrats should be talking about the issue of our National Park System and this research provides direction on how to talk about the parks effectively.

Why talk about the National Park System?

- 1.** Voters care about national parks and historical places within the Park System and winning independent voters in November will be essential. Supporting and protecting the national parks is an issue that appeals to this group of voters.
- 2.** Voters are interested in learning about a candidate's position on the issue of protecting the national parks. Although voters recognize that the National Park System faces problems, the Democratic nominee has the opportunity to further educate voters on the extent of these problems.
- 3.** With the vast majority of voters saying that they would be more likely to support a candidate who has a strong commitment to protecting the national parks, there virtually is no downside to lending support to this issue. Very few voters are less likely to vote for a candidate based on this issue or disagree with the goals of a pro-parks campaign.
- 4.** Talking about the parks implies that a candidate is forward-looking and cares about the future of the nation. Democrats and independent voters think it is important for the next president to be forward looking and someone who will be a good steward for our nation's resources. They believe that a candidate who puts a strong priority on protecting the national parks will have these qualities.
- 5.** Supporting national parks is associated with patriotic values. The parks represent what it means to be an American and voters take pride in our national parks. Democrats have the opportunity to leverage the perception that parks are patriotic in their campaigns and can capitalize on this idea in 2008.
- 6.** The parks are a broadening issue and talking about them appeals to a wider audience than does talking about the environment alone. Talking about the parks allows candidates to address pollution, plant and animal life, and our nation's history and future along with the environment, thereby appealing to more voters, including independent voters.

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- 7.** Being a supporter of our national parks says a lot about who a candidate is and their character. Beyond associating the support of national parks with being patriotic and forward looking, voters think a pro-parks candidate would unify the country, be pro-environment, share their values, and protect our heritage for future generations.
- 8.** Voters support an activist role for the government when it comes to the parks. The overwhelming majority of voters think it is important for the federal government to protect and support the major national parks as well as historic sites and monuments within the National Park System.

How to talk about the National Park System

- 1.** Most voters have recently visited a national park and have a strong connection to the parks from personal memories and family trips. Voters view the national parks as a legacy for future generations, and messages that conjure personal memories and emphasize sharing these experiences with future generations resonate with voters.
- 2.** Voters have an emotional connection with national parks. Using images of parks such as the Grand Canyon National Park or Yellowstone, and historic sites such as Gettysburg Battlefield or the Statue of Liberty can touch voters, bring back memories of their own park visits, and remind them what makes our country special.
- 3.** It is important to remind voters that historic sites such as the Statue of Liberty and the Washington Monument are part of the National Park System, as it helps voters to recognize the full breadth of the issue.
- 4.** Focus should be placed on plant and animal life, pollution, and funding. Voters are very concerned about the results of inadequate funding for the National Park System and that concern is heightened when it comes to consequences for plants and animals, pollution, and park protection and completion. Talking about funding in terms of voter priorities such as protecting animal and plant life, controlling air pollution, and discouraging private development within park boundaries is most effective.

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5. To maximize the potential of talking about the national parks, keep in mind that the parks represent values, not just policies. Candidates should talk about what our national parks mean to them and what they mean to the country. Protecting the parks means looking toward the future, being patriotic, and protecting our children's memories. Good framing statements include: what it means to be an American, the parks as America's legacy or heritage, the parks as national treasures, and protecting the parks for our children.
6. The upcoming centennial of the National Park System in 2016 is a good organizing principle to increase awareness of national parks issues. It is a deadline, an eight-year countdown to the future of our parks. It is interesting to note that the next president will preside over the centennial if reelected in 2012. Voters strongly support fully restoring our national parks so that they can serve the country for another 100 years by the National Park System's centennial.