



National Parks Conservation Association®
Protecting Our National Parks for Future Generations

FIELD REPORT

SUN COAST REGION

Winter 2009

Mangrove snapper. © brianallphoto.com

2016

NPCA Calls for Legislators to Actively Support Our National Parks

The arrival of 2009 brings with it many changes, including a new administration in our nation's capitol, a hopeful economic recovery plan, and a seven year countdown until the Centennial of the National Park System in 2016.

Our national parks speak to what we value as a nation and believe as a people. They provide avenues for national understanding, economic and environmental renewal, and personal inspiration. The approach of the Centennial is a unique opportunity to revitalize our nation's commitment to what has been called "America's best idea."

With just seven years to restore our national parks by their 100th birthday, NPCA is advocating that the next Congress work with the new Obama Administration to pass legislation to help prepare our national parks for another century of preservation, conservation, and enjoyment.

NPCA has identified six ways legislators can actively support our parks.

- Create jobs by funding park maintenance and transportation projects;
- Connect our national parks to community and civic life by creating a National Parks Corps, built on the model of the AmeriCorps program, and

by encouraging greater philanthropic support of parks;

- Enhance our education system by funding experiential learning opportunities and endowments for schoolchildren in our national parks;
- Improve air quality and wildlife habitat in and around our national parks by enacting Air and Climate legislation, and by expanding and implementing the Climate Friendly Parks program, which provides the parks a leadership role in carbon reductions;
- Modernize the park system's financial structure by developing a sustainable funding model;
- Exemplify leadership excellence by improving the training and development of park managers and by refining the management systems of the National Park Service.

In addition, NPCA supports the Second Century Commission. Chaired by former Senators Howard H. Baker, Jr. (R-TN) and J. Bennett Johnston, Jr. (D-LA), the National Parks Second Century Commission is a first-in-a-generation effort to examine national parks today, and chart a vision for their future. The volunteer Commission is made up of close to 30 national leaders, experts, and thinkers drawn from a broad range of backgrounds, including scientists, historians, conservationists,

academics, business leaders, policy experts, and retired National Park Service executives.

The Centennial is a unique opportunity to revitalize our nation's commitment to what has been called "America's best idea."

The Commission will produce a report in the fall of 2009 that offers: a vision for the parks and National Park Service, a plan of action to achieve that vision, and information essential to shaping an agenda for the new administration and Congress. The report will include recommendations for actions on Park Service policy and programs, including education and resource preservation, funding, organizational issues, and future shape of the Nation Park System.

The recommendations of the Second Century Commission combined with the much-needed and long-overdue additional funding are notable opportunities to ensure that all 391 parks units are prepared for the National Park's Centennial in 2016. Now is the time to act for our parks. To learn more, go to www.npca.org or email suncoast@npca.org.



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**Sun Coast Region
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www.npca.org

Florida, Louisiana, coastal Mississippi, the
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U.S. Virgin Islands

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NPCA is America's only private, nonprofit
advocacy organization solely dedicated to
protecting and preserving the National Park
System. NPCA was founded in 1919 and
today has over 330,000 members. Membership
benefits include this newsletter, the quarterly
National Parks magazine and more.

NPCA Membership Services Team

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John Adornato III at Sequoia National Park.
© David Bogardus

Message from the Regional Director, John Adornato III

South Florida's rainy season has once
again given way to the welcome arrival of
our tourist season. It's a perennial event,
but somehow it's different this year. This
seasonal transition seems intensified by the
many changes underway on our national

landscape. In 2008, Florida Governor Charlie Crist unexpectedly announced his
intention to undertake the largest land acquisition to greatly benefit Everglades
restoration; our economy dipped into a horrible and wide-spread crisis; and
citizens of the United States marched to the polls in record numbers to elect
an Obama-Biden Administration. For celebration and solitude, Americans will
likely spend more time visiting our national parks, in part to share local, low-cost
vacations with their families. While our national cultural, historical, and natural
treasures are a wonder to behold and learn about, they remain threatened by the
lack of funding for interpretive rangers and adequate visitor services.

As the Centennial of the National Park System in 2016
inches closer, we continue to work toward increased park
funding to overcome some of these challenges. NPCA
released a report outlining the needs of the parks to
acquire privately owned land within park boundaries.
The report, *America's Heritage For Sale*, notes that there are
"gaping holes that shatter the integrity of individual parks
and the system as a whole, and make it more difficult and
expensive for the Park Service to protect wildlife and the
parks' natural and cultural treasures."



In the Sun Coast Region, Virgin Islands National Park has more than 200 acres
that are owned by the Trust for Public Lands, which has expressed an interest in
selling the land to the park service under a 2-year purchase plan. This property,
Estate Maho Bay, is worth more than the \$9 million price tag due to significant
private donations, and ultimately would protect significant natural habitat and
the island's largest concentration of historic plantations and ruins from the time of
Danish colonization.

NPCA's efforts led the U.S. House of Representatives to double the funding
proposal for Park Service land-acquisition needs. Although Congress has not yet
decided how to fund the federal government for the current fiscal year, NPCA will
continue to advocate for this increase in the park service's funding levels. We must
ensure that some of these high-priority lands are not lost to development pressures
and instead are well protected.

Maintaining the breadth and beauty of our national parks is important to all of us,
especially in these difficult economic times. The Sun Coast Region appreciates your
support as we work to advocate for the protection of these unique resources. We
look forward to hearing your stories and sharing with you more of our team's park
protection successes.

Community Turns Out for 40th Anniversary of Biscayne National Park

On October 18th, 2008, a mild mannered, blue-eyed gentleman in his mid-eighties quietly explained how, 40 years ago to the day, he and a band of local conservationists victoriously took on powerful developers and eager politicians to wrestle Biscayne Bay away from sure destruction. These bold efforts ultimately led to the creation of Biscayne National Park, the largest marine park in the National Park System.

Lloyd Miller, who recently published a memoir of this episode entitled *Biscayne National Park: The Park That Almost Wasn't*, spoke of this historic moment at a daylong symposium hosted by NPCA, which also featured keynote speeches by Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Miami-Dade County Commissioner Katy Sorenson, Palmetto Bay Mayor Eugene Finny, and Park Superintendent Mark Lewis.

Also included in the symposium agenda were three expert panels designed to raise awareness about current issues that plague the park.

The first panel focused on the park's cultural history. Here, the discussion ranged from engaging tales of Native

people and their remaining prehistoric mounds, to pirates and international shipwrecks from the 18th century, to historic structures representing African-American early resort development and present-day spiritual ceremonies by a variety of groups. Panelists noted the many challenges they face to preserve these and other historical artifacts so that future generations will be able to understand the park's history and breadth of cultural diversity.

The second panel addressed the conditions of marine resources and the initiatives the park is undertaking to restore these resources while working within budget constraints. Located only five miles from Miami, the park's seagrass communities, fisheries, and coral reefs are experiencing acute pressure. Programs to grow seagrass and coral, while proven effective, are labor-intensive and costly.

The final panel explored the role of local community activists and county employees to combat development threatening the park through community education and the acquisition of adjacent lands.

Meet the Sun Coast Staff



Rob Clift is the Senior Marine Outreach Coordinator for the Florida Keys Field Office in Tavernier, Florida. Before

joining NPCA, he worked as a captain in the Florida Keys, teaching sailing, fishing, and snorkeling to different groups. In 2004, when Rob had the opportunity to move to the South Pacific island of American Samoa, he had no idea how this would shape his future work with NPCA. "When I saw the beauty of American Samoa National Park, snorkeled untouched reefs, and

walked unpolluted beaches, I realized the significance of caring for these extraordinary marine settings," he says. Rob returned to the Keys with a new sense of mission, to protect the waters of Florida Bay, which is the southern part of Everglades National Park. He has worked on projects like the Florida Bay Info Packet providing important information on fishing regulations and the bay's ecological habitat to boaters navigating these unique waters. Rob is also working on a boater-education course designed to help boaters protect the resources of Florida Bay. "Education is the key," he says. "The future of the Everglades is dependent on the actions we take right now."



Celebrating Biscayne National Park's 40th Anniversary. (from left to right) conservationist Joe Browder; NPCA Sun Coast Regional Director John Adornato; Miami Dade County Commissioner Katy Sorenson; conservationist Juanita Greene; and conservationist Lloyd Miller. © brianccallphoto.com

These engaging and informative panels enlightened more than 65 community members to the serious challenges facing Biscayne National Park and identified ways to join in protecting the sanctity of this unique and fragile national treasure.



Are you curious to know the size of your annual carbon footprint or ways you could reduce your greenhouse gas emissions? Let NPCA show you how to "Do Your Part!" This new NPCA program allows visitors, community members, and park supporters around the country to demonstrate their commitment to protecting parks from climate change through action.

The Do Your Part! Website, www.doyourpartparks.org, contains an emissions calculator developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to help visitors assess how much pollution they generate by driving their cars and other daily activities. It can help you devise a plan to lower your carbon footprint, and can even track your progress over time. Do Your Part!'s website can also enable you to network in support of your own favorite national parks—like Everglades!

The Return of Flamingo Lodge

For almost half a century, anglers, boaters, birders, canoers, and other adventurers have made Flamingo Lodge their destination. Built in 1959, Flamingo lured many park visitors to drive 38 miles from the park's entrance into the southwest corner of Everglades National Park. There, visitors stayed in one of Flamingo's 103 plain and affordable rooms—a perfect jumping off point for early morning jaunts deep into the park.

All that ended with the high winds and storm surge of Hurricane Wilma in 2005, which destroyed Flamingo Lodge. Now, the rebuilding process has begun.

Leading this effort, NPCA initiated a partnership with the Urban Land Institute and the South Florida National Parks Trust to co-sponsor a Technical Advisory Panel to



Flamingo sunset. © brianallphoto.com

brainstorm about possibilities for rebuilding Flamingo Lodge. The panel, consisting of a range of building experts from landscape architects to marina engineers, created an ambitious site plan for Flamingo that incorporated aspects of the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified construction standards. These included lodging accommodations such as eco-tents and hotel rooms; boat services for both anglers and kayakers; and camping sites and dining facilities that would appeal to both domestic and international visitors.

In August 2008, the panel held a public forum to present its ideas to a group of 40 community members and local park users—all eager to give feedback. The overwhelming public consensus supported expedited reconstruction of Flamingo, which would enable park users to more fully experience the park and would provide an economic boost to communities adjacent to the park. Although everyone would like to see Flamingo rebuilt without delay, the estimated \$500,000 for the official Master Site Plan and anywhere from \$30 to \$50 million for the reconstruction have yet to be secured.

Annual Kayak Trip in Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve

Early on a brisk Friday morning in mid-October a small group of NPCA members, fellow conservationists, and park enthusiasts gathered around Richard Bryant, Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve's Resources Chief, to hear his insights and instruction before squeezing themselves in kayaks and gliding through the calm, cool waters of this unique preserve.

A gorgeous, temperate day and falling tide made for a most enjoyable kayak run on Simpson Creek and the Fort George River for this group of 13. Healthy oyster beds and abundant wildlife served as a good indication of the quality of current resource-protection efforts.

Despite the scenery, this floating group also witnessed the encroachment

of development surrounding the preserve, noting a coal-fired power plant and its cooling towers looming in the distance; a built jetty that is preventing historic water flow through the marshes and causing sediment to build up, which clouds the once clear water and suffocates marine life. These scenes, contrasted with the natural beauty and historical significance of Timucuan, certainly made clear the need for continued preservation efforts.

Led by Bryant, Timucuan's only resource manager on staff, this group discussed Timucuan's Centennial Challenge project to repair and rehabilitate the Cedar Point Boat Ramp and the need



David Kahne, NPCA member, embarks on his maiden kayak voyage. © John Adornato III

for adequate funding for national park units to preserve and protect ecological and historical resources.

To enjoy a guided tour of Timucuan next fall, contact the Sun Coast Regional Office 954.961.1280 or suncoast@npca.org. We would be delighted to return to Timucuan with you.

Cultural History Flourishing in New Orleans Jazz National Historic Park

Jazz rings out loud and clear at the visitor center of the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park, much to the delight of visitors from all over the world. On any given day, musicians play this uniquely American art form free for passersby.

Park rangers, all of whom have musical backgrounds, often join the musicians to help tell the story of jazz through live performances, or “informances,” as Superintendent John Quirk likes to call them.



Music For All Ages Program performance at N.O. JAZZ. © Bruce Barnes, NPS

Among the smallest units within the National Park System, New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park encompasses three acres set within a larger city park of 30 acres, named Louis Armstrong Memorial Park. This tiny national historical park, surrounded by beautiful trees and a series of lagoons, includes four buildings that open up to a serene courtyard and a satellite visitor center, located six blocks away. In 2005, the park provided 50,000 people with a rich mix of culture and recreation.

It was three-and-a-half years ago when Hurricane Katrina's winds slammed into the area, damaging the roof of the

visitor center, ripping most trees from the ground, and dumping enough rain to overwhelm the lagoons' pumps, which led to flooding of the buildings' bottom floors.

But, as Superintendent Quirk wrote just days after the storm, “Jazz musicians do not dwell upon disappointment.” Work began immediately to restore the park and Quirk doubled his efforts to re-open the park's visitor center. With the help of a steady band of volunteers, Quirk and his six permanent employees worked diligently to bring back programming and increase visitorship, which has now returned to its pre-Katrina levels.

Most recently, the park has partnered with the State Museum of Louisiana in an ambitious 2016 Centennial Challenge project. Recently awarded \$2 million from the Department of Interior's National Park Service Centennial Challenge Fund and a matching grant from the State, the park will soon move into the construction phase of a project that will create a high-end performance and exhibition space expected to be completed by 2010. This new space, located in the Old Mint Building in the French Quarter, should provide jobs and help to shore up New Orleans' tourist economy. But restoration of the park's buildings in Louis Armstrong Park, which primarily serve the local community, has moved slowly.

Superintendent Quirk has called for the park to reopen as soon as possible, even while repairs are underway, adding “the National Park Service should rise to the challenge to lead the effort to bring the city back.” Projects such as the Centennial-funded Old Mint Building collaboration with the State are a good start and will encourage visitors to come out, which helps everyone in New Orleans. But efforts to restore the older, historically African-American communities such as Treme must progress more quickly, so that all in the community can return to their daily rhythm.

Protecting National Parks with Your Support

Our national parks have been called “America's best idea.” They offer us priceless experiences. They represent places to explore and enjoy, whether it's to reflect while taking a leisurely walk through a subtropical hammock, sharing a glimpse of crocodiles or roseate spoonbills, or learning more about what it was like to live and work on a coastal plantation, these extraordinary places need and deserve our protection. During this season, the staff at the National Parks Conservation Association would like to say a special thank you to our members, whose membership contributions have helped give a voice to our national parks. NPCA will continue to work to ensure our parks are protected, well managed, properly funded, and welcoming for present and future generations.

Membership

Looking for a meaningful gift idea? Introduce your family and friends to the stunning beauty and rich history of our national parks. Gift members receive a fleece blanket to welcome them to NPCA plus a year's subscription to our award-winning National Parks magazine. We'll send you a gift announcement card so that you may personally present your gift, and a receipt for tax purposes as well. Trustees for the Parks members receive additional benefits. Visit www.npca.org, call 800.628.7275, or contact Lisa Welch in our Sun Coast office at lwelch@npca.org or 954.961.1280.



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NPCA Hosts 24th Annual Everglades Coalition Conference

The Everglades could be getting a big boost soon. Thanks to Governor Crist's landmark announcement earlier this year, the state of Florida is embarking on the largest conservation land purchase in its history by acquiring the U.S. Sugar Corporation and its 181,000 acres in the Everglades Agricultural Area. By using these lands to store and clean water, which will move south into Everglades National Park and Florida Bay, we will make giant leaps towards a healthy ecosystem.

Learn more about this other exciting new endeavors at the **24th Annual Everglades Coalition Conference January 8–11, 2009 in Miami.** NPCA is hosting and co-chairing the conference, where we will honor the Governor's commitment to restoration and discuss what this means for the future of the Everglades and south

Florida. The Conference, to be held at the Hilton Miami Downtown, is the largest annual forum for Everglades conservation and restoration. It brings together the Coalition's 49 ally organizations with our local, state, and federal partners. Find more conference details at www.evergladescoalition.org.



Roseate Spoonbill
© Everglades Coalition, Steven Left.

Sun Coast Region

NPCA protects and enhances America's National Park System for present and future generations. NPCA's Sun Coast Regional Office advocates for parks located in Florida, Louisiana, coastal Mississippi, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. We are on the ground collaborating and connecting with local communities and diverse constituents to create lasting protections for the regions 24 park units. Within these areas are four national parks; four national historical parks; two national preserves; five national monuments; two national memorials; two national historic sites; two national seashores; one national scenic trail; and two national heritage areas. Which of these have you experienced? Find out more about parks in our region and beyond on the Explore the Parks section of www.npca.org.