



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

October, 2008

BRIEFING STATEMENT

ISSUE: “VolunTourism” Feasibility Study Background

NPS Centennial Goal: Establish "VolunTourism" excursions to national parks for volunteers to help achieve natural and cultural resource protection goals.

The Future of America’s National Parks Report, May 2007.

VolunTourism

The basic concept of “VolunTourism” is to incorporate volunteer activities within the context of an American traveler's vacation. The goal is to establish where appropriate a NPS “VolunTourism” program geared towards the tour industry through which any qualifying group tour operator could incorporate one or more park "work day" programs in its regular commercial tour offerings.

“VolunTourism” is defined as a seamless integrated combination of voluntary service to a destination and the best traditional elements of travel, arts, culture, geography, and history in that destination.

Benefits

- Thousands of vacationers will have a great "work" experience, virtually guaranteed to create a renewed and lasting pride in their national parks.
- Group tour operator “partners” will bear 100% of the cost of promoting the concept of “VolunTourism” opportunities available within our parks and supply the volunteer work force.
- Group tour operators nationwide will be given the opportunity to add attractive “hands-on” components to their existing programs and create new packages linking “in depth” park experiences.

“VolunTourism” Feasibility Study Background

The NPS will be working with a special federal study group drawn from the USDA’s Executive Potential Program and the National Tour Association to examine the concept of VolunTourism within the National Park Service and develop the outline of a sustainable program.

National Tour Association

The National Tour Association, founded in 1951, is the premier group and packaged travel organization in the U.S. representing, in addition to over 600 tour operators and 2,000 supplier members and destination marketing organizations. The National Tour Association has expressed a strong interest in “VolunTourism” in the national parks.

USDA's Executive Potential Program

Members of the USDA's Executive Potential Program Action Learning Team are a highly motivated group of GS-13 - GS-15 individuals from several federal agencies who want to develop a project around the opportunity to resolve a real organizational problem. The “VolunTourism” Feasibility Study for the National Park Service is the challenge they have chosen to complete by January 2009.

Members of the Action Learning Team

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Concerns

- A letter dated August 28, 2008 from the Associate Director, Partnerships and Visitor Experience Chris Jarvi has notified the Action Learning Team to proceed with their study of the potential of “VolunTourism” in the national parks.
- A letter to the Regional Directors and Superintendents indicating that the Action Learning Team is taking on an analysis of “VolunTourism” for the NPS has also been sent to the Regional Directors.
- The “VolunTourism” Project will look at DO-21 Donations and Fund Raising to ensure that such a program falls within policy guidelines.
- There is a connection to the fee program with “VolunTourism” due to the NPS relationship with the commercial tour (bus) industry and to a lesser extent the new volunteer pass (recognition award). Input will be provided related to fees, access,

reservations, and their relationship to volunteer opportunities for commercial and tourism operators.

- Many concessioners and parks with concessions are already providing “VolunTourism” opportunities. Since many of these volunteers would be staying in concession facilities it is important that the concessioners are involved in the concept plan.
- If the NPS determines to go forward with “VolunTourism Program” policy guidance it will need to be developed to ensure consistency across the Service in the implementation of a “VolunTourism” program.

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