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Testimony of Denis Galvin, Trustee

RE: Economic Recovery: Impact of Targeted Investments in the National Parks

Before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

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Good morning, Chairman Bingaman, Ranking Member Domenici, and Members of the Committee. I am Denis Galvin, Trustee of the National Parks Conservation Association. Prior to joining the Board of Trustees, I served as Acting Director and Deputy Director of the National Park Service and served a full and satisfying career managing the nation's parks within that agency. Thank you for inviting me to testify at today's hearing on the important issue of economic recovery.

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) has been the leading voice of the American people on behalf of our national parks. Our mission is to protect and enhance America's National Park System for current and future generations. On behalf of our more than 340,000 members, we ask that you and your congressional colleagues seize this tremendous opportunity to foster economic recovery for our nation, in part, through investments in jobs that restore, renew and protect our national parks. The National Park Service has approximately $1 billion of projects that clearly are "ready to go", and are focused on restoring historic structures, repairing national park infrastructure, greening park facilities, and fixing trails. We estimate these projects would produce upwards of 22,000 jobs. There are also significant opportunities to provide jobs through science and service-related projects in an economic recovery plan. Through this stimulus effort, we have the opportunity to make employment-producing investments now in things that we must ultimately pay for anyway, in a way that protects our national treasures,

Mr. Chairman, our national parks are home to some of the nation's most iconic and sacred landscapes, monuments, and historic sites. They are among the most recognizable places in the world. The parks provide a mirror of the soul of America, and are the physical embodiment of the collective experience and spirit we value as Americans. The national parks provide a unique opportunity to help the nation toward economic recovery and stability. With 391 units in 49 states and 4 territories, national parks employ 20,000 workers in some of the most remote and economically hard-hit areas of the nation. In the areas directly adjacent to the parks and communities many miles distant, parks are the focus of tourism spending. With 275 million visitors in 2007, local economies benefited from nearly $12 billion in visitor investment in recreation, lodging and general consumer spending. Furthermore, economic studies have demonstrated that for every federal dollar, the parks generate $4 of benefit to local and regional economies. There are few other areas of the American economy that reach as far and generate benefits as deeply into communities in jobs and revenue as the national parks.

Historically, the national parks have demonstrated themselves as areas that create rippling economic benefits and add to the stability of the nation in times of economic crisis. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Created by President Franklin Roosevelt through the Works Progress Administration, the CCC set an anchor to add stability to the American economy as the nation was buffeted during the Great Depression. The Roosevelt Administration invested $3 billion over the lifetime of the program ($47.5 billion in current dollars) to put 3 million men to work on projects in the

national parks and elsewhere building bridges, trails and structures that stand today and in many areas define the look and feel of the national parks.

Seventy five years later, an equally significant opportunity presents itself: the National Park Service had nearly $1 billion in road and related infrastructure projects ready to go within the year, many of which could start within a matter of weeks or months. Investment in this area will immediately put to work hundreds of architects, landscape architects, design engineers and other contractors necessary to prepare the ground for construction projects. Virtually all of this work likely would be performed by small businesses on contract to NPS, distributed in communities large and small across the country. An infusion of this kind would provide support to highly skilled workers and the communities where they live and work very quickly.

But the opportunity provided for and by the national parks is broader than road and related construction projects. Dozens of natural and cultural resource protection projects are similarly prepared and ready for productive work as soon as an investment is made – projects that have been carefully thought out as a part of the Natural Resource Challenge planning process and its cultural resource counterpart. Similarly, the parks have long provided an opportunity for meaningful investment in science. As with the planning and design work performed by architecture and engineering contractors for construction projects, resource and science projects are supported by a broad network of universities across the nation, the Cooperative Ecosystem Study Units, or CESUs. Investments here inject funding unto university contractors that in-turn support surrounding communities.

Two additional areas provide targeted opportunity for investments that will create ripple effects throughout local economies. Parks have long been observed for their potential as showcases for environmental (green) design. As the nation becomes more serious about climate change, the parks provide a prime opportunity to display design techniques, test-bed projects and carbon-saving green practices that will educate many of the 275 million visitors per year. The economic recovery plan that Congress and the new administration produce would provide an opportunity to push toward a goal of making national park facilities carbon neutral by the 2016 centennial through retrofits to existing facilities, Finally, just as President Roosevelt launched the CCC to put men to work for the lasting benefit of the parks, a significant investment in national service in our national parks, including an investment in additional resources through the Corporation on National and Community Service to create a National Parks Service Corps, will engage young (and older) workers in gainful, productive employment renewing our national treasures at a time when they are likely to have difficulty finding jobs. Like the contributions of the CCC, they can produce the next generation of renewal in our national parks and produce lasting, modern-day contributions, following the precedent set in the 1930's through the CCC . These jobs and their associated training and education benefits can provide enormous opportunities to a diverse array of inner-city and rural youth, target those at risk of dropping out, and restore our national parks at the same time.

Below, I have broken down the areas that we see would benefit most from targeted investments through an Economic Recovery plan as it is developed by Congress. The project areas will not only set the parks on a better footing as they approach their 2nd Century, they will delivery much needed support into the gateway and regional economies, many of which are carrying the brunt of impact from the current economic downturn.

Natural Resource Opportunities

When designed in 1999, the Natural Resource Challenge was estimated to require $200 million per year in increased funding to fully accomplish its goals. Due to budget restrictions in the Department of the Interior, the funding goal was cut back by one half, to $100 million, of which the National Park Service was able to realize approximately $78 million in its highest year. Projects that were side-lined or truncated as due to funding concerns include the following:

- Exotic Plant Management Teams -- funded at about $5 million currently, this program can easily be resized as a $20 million program, with funding delivered to partners outside of park boundaries to

affect cross-boundary eradications/control efforts. This program would result in hiring locals, youth, etc. with positive economic impacts.

- Exotic Animal Management – a natural and highly necessary companion to exotic plant management efforts, this effort is well designed but unfunded and critical for the control of non-native pigs, rats, snakes, mongoose, etc. that cause significant damage to the parks.
- Forest Health -- eastern deciduous forests are under attack from a host of woolly adelgids, ash borers, sudden oak death, Asian long horn beetle and other invasive exotics. NPS is positioned to become a leader in exotic control, forest restoration (and chestnut restoration), etc. Western forests are similarly under attack. Ready programs would easily support an investment of $20 million to 30 million with a significant, localized economic and employment benefits.
- Species restoration -- NPS has a broad variety of key species missing in parks that it can restore to improve the health of federal lands and the national park experiences. This effort would support an investment of $10 million per year easily.
- Oceans – Vast areas under the care and management of NPS are virtually unknown, unmapped and uninventoried. Precious ocean resources are also underrepresented in the National Park System. Overfishing and inappropriate use that damages the resource base are significant problems that require strong action. Programs to zone fishing and monitor the recovery of highly impacted ocean national parks are already conceptualized. Funding these efforts at a level of $20 million to $30 million per year would enable recovery and sustainable fishing that is in everyone's interest.
- Migratory species – funding in migratory research would spur a rebirth of ecosystem thinking, shaping invasive control priorities, forestry priorities, grazing and mining in a cohesive strategic fashion -- for long term genetic viability, movement, and replenishment of isolated populations of native plants and animals. Funding of research through CESUs and other cooperative grants would deliver significant improvement at a programmatic cost of approximately $15 million per year.
- Mitigation of Borderlands impacts -- restoration of illegal immigration impacts in border protected areas in support for CONAMP's effort to build roadless protected areas on the Mexican side of border. Programmatic cost is estimated at $5 million per year.
- International Program leadership – for some years NPS has been hobbled in its ability to teach resource preservation abroad and learn emerging and new techniques tested elsewhere in the world. NPS should be repositioned to provide international environmental leadership and to open itself to learning the lessons of others. We have much to offer in programs that are already designed (e.g., international short course, international training in general, outreach expertise, exchanges), but where the reach is severely truncated due to funding. Programmatic cost for correction is approximately $7 million per year.

Cultural Resource Opportunities

Less well known than the maintenance backlog, the Park Service is similarly burdened by an equally imposing museum collections backlog comprised of an estimated 56 million uncataloged items. These pieces, roughly 45 percent of the total NPS collection, lack the basic documentation and accountability means and measures to ensure their continued safe preservation, much less their retrieval.

Possibly incorporated as a part of the National Park Service Corps described below, the parks could well utilize a significant number of well-trained, highly-skilled professionals, whose sole mission would be to assist with the reduction or elimination of the current museum collections backlog. A report by the National Academy of Public Administrators (NAPA) entitled "Saving Our History: A Review of National Park Cultural Resource Programs," cited Yellowstone National Park as a poster child for the daunting scope of the museum collections backlog. Although recognized by the National Archives and Records Administration as an "affiliated archives," the park reportedly has 100,000 items in its history, biology, and paleontology collections that have not been cataloged. Yellowstone has been without an archivist since May 2007 and recently lost a museum technician position. The NAPA report tersely concludes that "as a result Yellowstone's important cultural collections are at risk."

In 1933, the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) program was established. HABS provided employment for draftsmen, architects, and historians, who were put to work documenting the design and condition of some of the most significant historic structure on the American landscape. Current plans to use our national parks as vehicles for job creation and economic stimulus should take a cue from the New Deal and ensure that job opportunities will be provided widest possible array of Americans in need of such relief.

Park Science

As with other resource –related opportunities, investments in park science will carry benefits in job creation or preservation that ripple outward to local communities. A major setback to the future success of the NPS was the loss of the agency's self-directed research program in 1994 when much of the capacity to pursue hard science was shifted from the agency and placed in the hands of the new National Biological Service. While this was a good plan and resulted in additional efficiencies across several agencies, the plan has come at a cost. Over time, focus on parks has gradually slipped more and more. Site fidelity and long term focus on complex systems that have wide annual variability plus the veneer of changing climate are irreplaceable requirements for prudent decision making in parks and critical for strong progress in a broad variety of areas. Reestablishment of a science program based in NPS – but delivered through contracts with CESUs and other entities at a level that existed 15 years ago -- $20 million per year – would reestablish this capacity and deliver additional security to communities across the United States.

Hand-in-hand with the reestablishment of NPS's own science capacity should be the rehabilitation of the Research Learning Center program (RLC). RLCs are usually adaptively-rehabbed historic structures (that would otherwise be unused but still require ongoing maintenance/repair). RLCs support researchers (with lab, bunk, meeting, seminar space) from academia and could be tweaked to provide constructive retraining for out placed workers on specific targeted projects. RLCs enhance the amounts of research done in parks (often for free) and provide for researcher/visitor contact opportunities and educational events for park visitors and classrooms. Approximately $4 million would finish the system of 32 RLCs and provide a strong base for the decisive role parks could play in place-based education. Messages about energy conservation, climate change and individual behavior, sustainability of biodiversity and quality of life messages, etc. would be positive outcomes linking the recovery efforts to other important goals.

Transportation Infrastructure

Although it is not their primary purpose, our national parks play a significant role in the economies of many communities. As much as $440 million worth of road projects in our national parks are ready to go to construction, and can rapidly produce as many as 7,000 jobs while also renewing our national heritage and helping to revitalize our national parks for our children and grandchildren. Another $500 million in transportation-related infrastructure investments could be similarly be ready within another year.

To enable visitors to experience these national treasures without unduly imposing adverse impacts on the natural, cultural, historical, and archeological resources inside the parks, the people of the United States have made very substantial investments in park infrastructure. Those investments have occurred over many years, but have been meager in recent years. Two times in our history, America made substantial investments in our national parks. Both were at times when our nation was investing in new infrastructure and jobs—one in a time of national economic crisis and the other during strong economic times.

It is more than half a century since the last of those significant investments were begun, and the lack of sufficient reinvestment since that time is evident from examining the condition of park roads today. The lack of investment, along with the popularity of the national parks, unfortunately has placed tremendous strains on national park infrastructure. For example, in Redwoods National Park one of the original segments of Highway 101 has not had its asphalt replaced since the 1960s. It is among the 53% of national park roads that are in poor condition. The road is in a constant state of disrepair, and is a safety hazard to vehicles and bicycles utilizing the road. The condition of the road is so poor that normal maintenance methods will no longer be effective without complete rehabilitation. The road parallels Richardson Creek which provides

habitat for Coho salmon, a federally listed species, and is a tributary to the Klamath River, an important salmon fishery. Numerous deteriorated galvanized culverts that are well beyond their serviceable life span drain large runoff flows through very large road fill areas. Failure of these culverts would result in significant sedimentation of Richardson Creek and the Klamath River, and would likely have an adverse impact on the native salmon. Fortunately, the Park Service does have a project to rehabilitate the Redwoods road that is ready to go. The project has received environmental clearance and all it needs is funding. The project would not only benefit the park, but would provide jobs to the surrounding Del Norte County which is one of the poorest in California.

The poor condition of national park transportation infrastructure is in large part due to decades of insufficient funding. The National Park Service has documented a total transportation investment need of more than $5 billion, comprised of $4.7 billion for roads, $220 million for bridges, and $508 million for front country trails that connect transportation nodes. We now have an opportunity to begin reinvesting in critical park infrastructure in a way that puts Americans to work in unnerving economic times while meeting our stewardship responsibilities to our children.

NPCA understands that the National Park Service has more than $270 million in 18 transportation infrastructure improvement projects that are ready to go to construction. When ready-to-go road projects that do not receive FLHP funding are included, the system-wide estimate exceeds $440 million. All these projects have obtained environmental clearance and can be contracted out within 180 days.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of the desperate state of national park infrastructure and of the importance of park roads to local communities is the Going-to-the-Sun Road in Glacier Park, Montana. Ascending over the continental divide at Logan Pass, the Going-to-the-Sun Road is rated as one of the ten best scenic drives in America. As such, it is a significant attraction generating over one and a half million visits per year making it an economic anchor for the tourism industry in the northwest portion of Montana. Yet, 75 years of rockslides and avalanches, severe weather, heavy traffic, and inadequate maintenance have left the road in urgent need of repair. Reconstruction began in 2007, but the funding has not kept pace with the project. More than $20 million in work is ready to begin if funding could be made available. There are many such examples of ongoing road work that could be accelerated for the benefit of both park visitors and the local economy.

In some instances, the project being proposed is not to replace deteriorating infrastructure, but instead to reduce infrastructure's impact upon irreplaceable natural resources and systems. For example, the Tamiami Trail project in Florida will raise a key section of the roadway to allow more water to flow from Lake Okeechobee through Everglades National Park to Florida Bay to improve ecosystem function, reduce harmful discharges to northern estuaries and increase water flow to water-starved areas. Unemployment in South Florida has risen dramatically with this economic downturn in particular because of the reduction in construction jobs. For a modest investment, this two-to three year project could produce dividends that are truly immeasurable both for the local economy and the environment.

As already noted, investment in park transportation infrastructure will bring immediate benefits to local communities and the national economy. Transportation projects will first create high-paying construction jobs that support local families. Using a standard public lands construction impact assessment model, as many as 7,000 jobs could be created through these projects. The secondary effect of these jobs upon the communities surrounding the parks—many of them in rural areas—would increase the benefit many times over as the income of these families is pumped back into the local economy. NPCA recently commissioned a study that found that every federal dollar invested in our national parks generates at least four dollars in direct economic benefit to state and local economies, with significant additional indirect benefits. This study was conservative and the true benefit for these projects is probably closer to the construction industry standard of 6 to 1.

Green Infrastructure

Two notable proposals are being made to the Transition Teams organizing for the Obama Administration. These include a proposal for $24 million being submitted to the DOI Transition Team

directed specifically to NPS in support of clean energy projects over the next 24 months, and a $150 million to $200 million proposal for developing net zero energy consumption park visitor centers to be submitted to the DOE Transition Team. NPCA supports both of these proposals, as park construction projects of all kinds have proven themselves time and time again as job creators for local communities and sound investments that showcase issues for the millions of visitors that come to the national parks year after year.

Investing in Service Opportunities and Volunteerism

An additional opportunity exists that would significantly expand the capacity of the National Park Service in the short term, and provide cost-effective employment opportunities in a manner that helps reduce the national park system maintenance backlog and address other critical NPS needs. We believe that creation of a **National Parks Service Corps**, as a component of the expansion of national and community service, presents an opportunity to address the NPS operating deficit and construction/maintenance backlog, while engaging more Americans in productive work at a time of dislocation to preserve historic and cultural resources, maintain trails and common areas, help promote tourism and recreation at a time when our economy needs it most, and strengthen educational efforts to connect park history with the next generation. Like 1933, when President Franklin Roosevelt married two foundering resources – jobless, young men and public lands that were subject to soil erosion and deforestation, the National Parks Service Corps can marry three foundering or idle resources – some of the 15 million young people at risk of reaching productive adulthood, the tens of millions of Baby Boomers who feel they are leaving the world in worse condition than they inherited it and want to serve, and our national parks that are in need of more full-time, part-time and traditional volunteers to meet urgent needs.

This proposal fits within existing proposals to expand Americorps through the Serve America Act, and can easily be implemented quickly through additional appropriations to the Corporation for Community and National Service. We propose placing 10,000 new paid volunteers in our national parks to dramatically increase the capacity of the parks to resolve backlogged construction and maintenance needs, while providing functionally useful training to a workforce in need.

Programmatic cost for this proposal is anticipated to be $200 million, allocated as follows:

- $60 million for 5,000 National Park Service Corps positions based on the Americorps National Civilian Community Corps model ($12,000 each),
- $50 million for 5,000 National Park Service Corps positions using the AmeriCorps Federal and State grant model the remaining 5,000 volunteers ($10,000 each),
- $50 million for a $5,000 educational award for all 10,000 volunteers,
- And $40 million for placement of full-time volunteer coordinators in the parks, and for administrative expenses.

Spending on this program can begin expeditiously, allowing for recruitment and initial training of both workforce and NPS management. Operationally, the National Park Service would administer the Corps and deploy new volunteer coordinators in national parks, and the new positions would be funded with living stipends and education awards through the Corporation for National and Community Service.

The new NPCC can build on two successful programs at the Corporation for National and Community Service. The Corporation's national service program called AmeriCorps currently operates in two ways. The AmeriCorps State and National program provides financial support through grants to public and nonprofit organizations that sponsor service programs around the country. AmeriCorps State and National members can volunteer part-time or full-time; many receive a modest living stipend based on the minimum wage; and most receive a "Segal education award" of $4,725 at the conclusion of their service.

The other AmeriCorps model is called the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). In contrast to the State and National grant program, NCCC is a full-time 10-month residential program. Members live on one of four regional campuses, receive intensive training, and are deployed as teams for

projects that range from disaster response to environmental protection. As with the State and National program, NCCC members receive an education award at the end of their service. The creation of a new parks-focused program would provide both stimulus to the communities in which the work took place and job creation for young and outplaced talent that is perhaps faster than any other programmatic method.

Centennial Challenge

Another opportunity for parks to help create jobs is the National Park Centennial Challenge. This program, the proposed authorization for which was included in the Senate's proposed economic recovery package, received a downpayment of funding from congressional appropriators this past fiscal year. Those projects generated approximately 350 jobs. If the Congress provides additional funding and a broader authorization for the Challenge, it would be quite easy for the National Park Service to issue a request for proposals that maximizes job creation opportunities of the next year to two years. Because many of the projects would be matched by private dollars, there would also be a doubling impact of any federal investment, thereby doubling its potential stimulative effect. I recommend that you seize the opportunity to get this important program launched.

Mr. Chairman, my intent in this testimony has been to demonstrate the variety of ways that investments in the national parks can deliver benefits in job creation and financial improvement to communities across the United States. Such investments would be long-lived, not ephemeral, as we see today with the lasting improvement the Roosevelt Administration provided with the CCC and the Eisenhower Administration provided with Mission 66. Americans love our national parks, and this kind of investment in them as part of an economic recovery package will have outsized benefits. By funding ready-to-go projects in America's favorite places, the Committee can both foster the creation of good, needed jobs, and renew the national inheritance we have a collective responsibility to pass to our children in at least as good as condition as we received it. An investment in our national parks is both an investment in today and in our future.

This concludes my testimony and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.