

June 22, 2015

Valencia Bembry
Executive Director
The Destination & Travel Foundation
Destination Marketing Association International
2025 M Street NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20036

Dear Ms. Bembry and Esteemed members of the DMAI Foundation Board of Trustees:

I am writing today to enthusiastically nominate the National Park Service for The Destination & Travel Foundation's Spirit of Hospitality Award for 2016 on behalf of the following organizations that together, represent hundreds of thousands of travelers.

The National Park Service (NPS) manages the United States' most iconic destinations and attracts millions of visitors from across the Nation and around the world. The world's first national park, Yellowstone, was created by an act of Congress in 1872 as a "pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people in order to protect for all time this outstanding natural area."

As Congress created more parks, the need for an agency to administer the park system became clear, yielding the National Park Service in 1916. There is no better way to recognize the NPS centennial anniversary and its 100 years of exceptional dedication and commitment to the travel and tourism industry, than through DMAI's 2016 Spirit of Hospitality Award.

Today, the National Park System's more than 400 units, covering more than 83 million acres, include sites ranging from the homes of historic figures to Civil War battlefields, from Alaska's gigantic, 13.2-million-acre Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve to Independence Hall National Historical Park, memorializing where the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution were debated and signed among other historic moments. In addition to national parks, the park system includes national monuments, seashores, recreation areas, historic sites, military parks, battlefields, and other designated units. Through this variety, the park units compose a system of sites that represent the heritage and spirit of America.

Besides the obvious benefits that travelers enjoy from visiting their national parks, both physical, spiritual, and emotional, trip-related spending by NPS visitors generates and supports a considerable amount of economic activity within gateway communities and destination cities near national parks. As the economy continues to shrug off the effects of the Great Recession, tourism is making hefty gains for national parks and their local communities.

In 2014, the National Park System received over 292 million recreation visits. NPS visitors spent \$15.7 billion in local gateway regions (defined as communities within 60 miles of a park). The contribution of this spending to the national economy was 277,000, \$10.3 billion in labor income, \$17.1 billion in value added, and \$29.7 billion in output. The lodging sector saw the highest direct contributions with 48 thousand jobs and \$4.8 billion in output directly contributed to local gateway economies nationally. The

sector with the next greatest direct contributions was restaurants and bars, with 60 thousand jobs and \$3.2 billion in output directly contributed to local gateway economies nationally.

A notable initiative by the National Park Service is their Urban Agenda to connect new audiences living or working in cities near national parks. The NPS Urban Agenda aligns parks, programs and partnerships to better serve communities near 10 key cities including Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, Richmond (VA), Washington, Jacksonville, St. Louis, Detroit, Tucson and Richmond (CA). In addition, the President unveiled the ‘Every Kid in a Park’ initiative that provides free access to our federal lands, including the national parks, to each and every fourth grader during the 2015-2016 school year with the hopes of engaging the next generation of stewards.

In 2016, the National Park System will celebrate its 100th anniversary, an ideal opportunity to recognize America’s treasures for their next 100 years. For all of these reasons and more, the organizations listed below enthusiastically endorse the National Park Service for the Destination & Travel Foundation’s Spirit of Hospitality Award for 2016.

Sincerely,

American Alliance of Museums
American Recreation Coalition
Association of Partners for Public Lands
The Corps Network
The Friends of the Oregon Caves and Chateau
Grand Canyon Association
Japanese American Citizens League
National Parks Conservation Association
National Park Hospitality Association
National Park Foundation
Southeast Tourism Society
Wolf Trap Foundation for Performing Arts