

**STATEMENT OF JONATHAN B. JARVIS, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM, CONCERNING OVERSIGHT OF THE  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

**June 14, 2016**

---

Chairman Chaffetz, Ranking Member Cummings, and members of the committee, at your request, I appear before you today to discuss oversight of the National Park Service (NPS).

The NPS manages many of our nation's most iconic and beloved landscapes and historic sites. We are responsible for managing more than 400 individual parks with more than 84 million acres of land, stretching from Acadia National Park in the State of Maine to the National Park of American Samoa in the South Pacific. The NPS also manages numerous wild and scenic rivers and national trails; programs that recognize our nation's historic structures; and programs that help local governments and organizations provide recreational opportunities and protect open space. We are seeing record-breaking visitation – more than 300 million last year – and the resulting economic activity created by the parks topped \$16 billion. We are accomplishing all of this on an annual budget that is less than the city of Austin, Texas.

This year, we are commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the National Park Service, and we are asking more of our 22,000 employees than ever before, as we use this milestone to promote the parks and all the work that the NPS does to connect with and inspire new, younger, more diverse audiences.

The national parks are supported and loved by the American public, not only because they are beautiful and historic, but also because they are well-managed, protected, interpreted and maintained by a professional workforce—employees who take great pride in their work and hold themselves to high standards of conduct. I've had the privilege of being part of that workforce for the last 40 years, and the honor of leading the organization as its director for the last seven years.

But we are an organization of human beings. By our very nature, we make mistakes, individually and collectively. On occasion, we uncover incidents involving errors in judgment and misconduct. We cannot stop all wrongdoing, but when we see situations that are improper, we can respond thoughtfully to implement changes and to ensure that the same conduct is not repeated. I would like to emphasize that the vast majority of the National Park Service's 22,000 employees conduct themselves with great integrity and passion for their work. This makes it all the more disappointing when we find mistakes and wrongdoing in our ranks.

And sometimes those mistakes happen at the top. Last year, I wrote a book to celebrate the NPS's Centennial, *Guidebook to the American Values and Our National Parks*. My goal in writing the book was to inspire and engage more Americans in our national parks and to share my love and admiration for these amazing places. I wrote this book in my personal capacity, and I directed that any book proceeds benefit the NPS through Eastern National, a nonprofit organization that operates stores and sells merchandise in numerous national parks, and through

the National Park Foundation, the congressionally chartered organization that raises private funds for the benefit of the national parks. I have not received any personal benefit from the sales of the book. That was never my goal. I have donated the copyright to the National Park Foundation.

However, I wrote the book without appropriate appreciation and regard for my responsibility to follow established processes, including consulting the Department's Ethics Office, before it was published. The Department of the Interior's Office of Inspector General (OIG) investigated the nature of the creation, publication, and terms related to this book. The report, released in February 2016, confirmed that I received no compensation for writing this book, but rightly criticized me for not seeking advice from the Department's Ethics Office.

As a result of my actions, which violated ethics standards, I received a formal reprimand and I am receiving, and actively participating in, monthly ethics training. This training serves as a valuable continuing reminder of my mistake and obligations going forward. Additionally, my duties as the National Park Service's ethics officer have been removed and transferred to the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks for the remainder of this administration. I was held accountable for my mistake.

I was wrong not to seek ethics guidance on the most appropriate path forward to publish this book. I am sorry that I failed initially to understand and accept my mistake. I have apologized to all NPS employees through a memo distributed in May. In my apology, I urged our employees to let my mistake serve as a reminder of the need and importance to seek ethics guidance. I reinforced that we are all responsible and accountable for upholding a high standard of ethical behavior.

I apologize to you as well. If I had the opportunity to push the re-start button and do this again, I would not do it the same way. I would seek the appropriate guidance and approvals before I began writing, and I would take a much harder look at my actions in the context of the example I want to set for NPS employees. I also offer my apology to the American people, who have entrusted me with the important task of leading the National Park Service and upholding the highest standards of public service.

As I said, I was held accountable for my mistake.

Holding employees accountable for their actions is essential for the National Park Service to uphold the public trust it enjoys. When mistakes and inappropriate actions are identified, we must follow due process and determine the appropriate response.

In some cases, the NPS identifies misconduct and refers the case to the OIG to investigate. We do that to ensure an impartial review. For instance, the NPS Investigative Service Branch of Law Enforcement, Security and Emergency Services referred a case involving the improper purchase of firearms and weapons in Mojave National Preserve to the OIG. Together they worked on ensuring that the actions of involved staff at that park were thoroughly investigated and then, following due process, the staff members were held accountable for their actions.

In other cases, employees, partners or visitors report possible misconduct to the OIG for investigation. The National Park Service is committed to cooperating with the Office of

Inspector General and takes the OIG's reports very seriously. One example of this is the recent OIG report on the sexual harassment in the Grand Canyon River District. I and the rest of the National Park Service leadership were extremely disappointed in the conditions outlined in the report, and we are acting both quickly and thoughtfully to change the conditions that women experienced in the River District.

We have zero tolerance for sexual harassment. We are committed to fundamentally changing the culture that previously allowed work environments that enabled sexual harassment to develop and fester.

At the NPS leadership level, we have committed to a comprehensive service-wide approach to addressing and preventing sexual harassment. Our senior leadership team has made a commitment to identifying and fixing the conditions that allow harassment to take place; to building work environments where all individuals are treated with respect and dignity; and to holding those individuals who engage in sexual harassment accountable for their behavior. We are holding senior leaders accountable. In the case of the Grand Canyon National Park, the superintendent retired on June 1, and we are working to select a new superintendent as soon as possible.

With the advice and support of Members of Congress, including Congresswoman Nikki Tsongas, the National Park Service is learning from other large organizations that have successfully reduced sexual harassment and hostile work environment conditions, including the Department of Defense and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Among the things we have learned from their experiences is the importance of:

- senior leadership engagement and attention to these issues;
- sustained attention and action over many years;
- assurance that victims are supported and safe, and have an agency representative to advocate on their behalf;
- accurate data to inform agency action;
- a strong investigatory capacity to pursue reported incidents and allegations; and
- visibility and transparency in the process.

There is no quick and easy way to end sexual harassment. We know it will take some time to complete a thoughtful, comprehensive program to end sexual harassment in the NPS, and we are actively developing and working on a program to meet that goal. Our leadership team has made a serious commitment to investing the time and resources needed to address this issue in a manner respectful of those who have suffered sexual harassment in the workplace. As one of the next steps, we will develop and conduct an anonymous nationwide survey of our employees to understand the prevalence of sexual harassment in the NPS. We will use the information from that survey to develop a baseline understanding of the problem and to inform our responses at every level of the organization.

In summary, we are committed to ensuring that every NPS employee can work in a safe and secure environment, where everyone is treated with respect.

Mr. Chairman, this completes my statement. I am happy to answer any questions you or the other members may have.

# National Park Service Director (U.S. National Park Service)



National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis (For a high-resolution image, click on the photo.)

NPS Photo

## **Jonathan B. Jarvis**

### **18th Director, National Park Service**

Jonathan B. Jarvis began his career with the National Park Service in 1976 as a seasonal interpreter in Washington, D.C. Today, he manages that agency whose mission is to preserve America's most treasured landscapes and cultural icons.

Jarvis's 39-year career has taken him from ranger to resource management specialist to park biologist to superintendent of parks such as Craters of the Moon, North Cascades, Wrangell-St. Elias, and Mount Rainier. Before being confirmed as the 18th Director of the National Park Service on September 24, 2009, Jarvis served as regional director of the bureau's Pacific West Region.

Today, he is responsible for overseeing an agency with more than 22,000 employees, a \$3 billion budget, and more than 400 national parks that attract more than 280 million visitors every year who generate \$30 billion in economic benefit across the nation.

The National Park Service brings the park idea to virtually every county in America. Grants from the Land and Water Conservation and Historic Preservation Fund help communities preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Since 1976, the Service's tax credit program has leveraged more than \$60 billion in private investment in historic preservation to help revitalize downtowns and neighborhoods across the country.

Jarvis has also reinvigorated the National Park Service's role as an international advocate for protected areas and recognized world leader in cultural and natural resource management.

Managing the National Park Service on the eve of its centennial in 2016, Jarvis has focused on several key areas that are critical for the future: enhancing stewardship of the places entrusted to the Service's care; maximizing the educational potential of parks and programs; engaging new generations and audiences, and ensuring the welfare and fulfillment of National Park Service employees.

Jarvis speaks frequently about climate change, sustainability, the outdoors as a source of public health, and the parks as a unifying, inspirational force for the nation. His blueprint for the agency's second century, *A Call to Action*, calls for innovative, ambitious, yet practical ways to fulfill the National Park Service's promise to America in the 21st century.

From a seasonal interpreter in the year of our nation's bicentennial to the head of an internationally known institution on the eve of its 100th birthday, Jarvis has gained a thorough knowledge of these great American treasures, the national parks.

"America's National Park System is a gift from past generations to this and succeeding generations," said Jarvis. "And while the challenges we face today-like climate change, shrinking open space, habitat destruction, non-native species, and air and water pollution-could not have been imagined when this agency was established in 1916, our mission remains the same: to preserve this nation's natural and cultural heritage, unimpaired for the enjoyment of this and future generations."