

The Trust for Public Land - National Parks Conservation Association
The Wilderness Society - American Rivers - Defenders of Wildlife - Earthjustice
Friends of the Earth - GreenLatinos - League of Conservation Voters - Outdoor
Industry Association - South Carolina Wildlife Federation

January 11, 2019

Hon Donald J. Trump, President of the United States
Hon Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader, US Senate
Hon Nancy Pelosi, Speaker, US House of Representatives
Hon. Chuck Schumer, Minority Leader, US Senate
Hon. Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader, US House of Representatives

Dear President Trump, Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader Schumer, and
Minority Leader McCarthy:

As the government shutdown extends into its third week, we are writing to express our deep concern over the unacceptable situation unfolding on our public lands and particularly at our national parks. While some parks are closed to the public, many more remain open but operating without the staff and resources needed to protect park resources from lasting, irreparable damage and the public from harm. The only real solution to protecting our parks from further irreversible damage is to reopen the government to fund them. We urge you to act now to protect the health and safety of visitors and to protect park resources by approving H.R. 266, the FY 19 Interior and Environment appropriations bill that will allow all parks to reopen and operate safely.

We believe every national park is an irreplaceable treasure. America's national park system is an incredible public asset that deserves our very best care. In addition, millions of people visit national parks every year, and the federal government has a responsibility to care for their health and safety. And yet during this shutdown, we have seen trash and human waste piling up on roads and in campgrounds in places like Rocky Mountain and Joshua Tree National Parks. These are unacceptable and dangerous conditions. Hundreds of people suffer injuries in national parks every year, and operating the parks without adequate search and rescue staff is reckless and irresponsible.

The federal government also has an obligation to steward the national parks so they are available to our children and grandchildren. Allowing access to our parks without ensuring that stewardship is negligent.

The lack of transparency around the Administration's decision-making affecting our parks and other public lands during the shutdown is also of great concern. The Administration's reported proposal to use recreation fees to address staffing shortages at some parks is not a solution to this grave situation. It fails to meet the immediate needs of the parks, their visitors, and local communities, including the need to protect irreplaceable natural and cultural resources, and it ultimately funnels away money from our parks in the long term. Similarly, the Administration's decision to partially restaff only a fraction of national wildlife refuges fails to respond to the acute impacts of the shutdown on the National Wildlife Refuge System and may yield further consequences to refuge resources and visitors alike.

National parks are the heart and soul of so many American communities. We are grateful for the state, local and private entities who have stepped in to look out for the parks in their backyard: these efforts speak to the importance of these spaces in our country. But our national parks deserve better than an improvised patchwork of emergency care and those resources could be used to augment federal funding, not replace it. Our parks and public lands need robust funding and full-time protection and we urge you to approve H.R. 266, the FY 2019 Interior appropriations bill immediately to resolve this pressing matter.

Sincerely,

Diane Regas, President and CEO
The Trust for Public Land

Theresa Pierno, President and CEO
National Parks Conservation Association

Jamie Williams, President
The Wilderness Society

Wm. Robert Irvin, President and CEO
American Rivers

Jamie Clark, President and CEO
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