

# AMERICA'S STATE PARKS

## President's Monthly Report

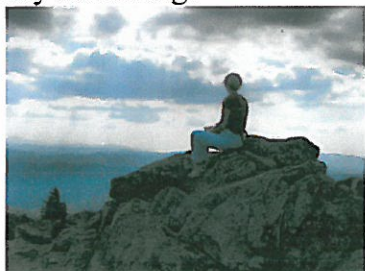
Fifteenth Monthly Report

### Year End – 2010

As the year draws to a close and we prepare for the Holidays, I think we all become reflective about the past year and what the future holds for us.

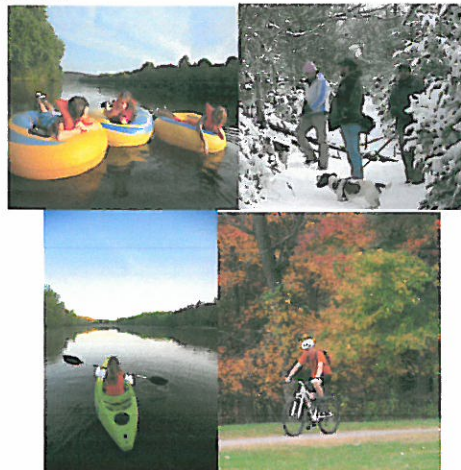
That's certainly the case for me and I must say I have pondered a good bit about the significant challenges America's State Parks face. Budget cuts and closures loom across the land. Rarely are state parks treated unlike any other agency or program the states have to offer – yet they are unique among government programs.

Unlike most agencies and functions of government, state parks contribute substantially to the health and well being of our citizens and they stimulate our economy. Providing a therapeutic tonic for the mind, body and spirit is a key function for parks. Some therapy comes from vigorous exercise as we engage in outdoor recreation. Hiking, biking, horseback riding, swimming and kayaking are some of the more strenuous and physically rewarding. Birding, picnicking, walking and meditation are less physical, but emotionally relaxing. There's a oneness with nature that cleanses the soul and makes a park visit especially rewarding.



I've been contemplating the remarkable accomplishments of the dedicated men

and women who serve the public in Virginia's state parks. I'm sure every state – more or less – has a similar experience. Staff and volunteers – some young and some older – encounter park visitors and enhance their experience. These public servants help deliver the therapy our parks have to offer. It may be the sharing of unique experiences or knowledge of natural and cultural history, it may be simply a warm smile and accurate directions or it could be encouragement to engage in a vigorous outdoor experience that strengthens our bodies.



In the last fiscal year America's state parks have seen visitation increase some 1.5 million over the previous year exceeding 728 million visits. With that comes an economic impact in excess of \$20 billion. General fund expenditures dropped from \$924 million nationally to about \$699 million. During the same period the number of operating parks increased from 2,080 to 2094 and total areas managed increased from 6,548 to 7,814. Clearly, state parks are a frugal and valuable enterprise. Perhaps there is no other enterprise of government that is more effective and efficient in meeting its mission.

The American economy is in difficult shape and our politics seem to be disappointing to one and all – those on the left and those on the right agree – our politics is banal, destructive and in dire need of reform. Wealth, power and deregulation are the goals of some while redistribution of collective wealth to those less fortunate and stimulation of local and state economies through infrastructure development and making capital available for loans to entrepreneurs are the secrets to success according to others. In my mind, the real question should be “What do we want America to be when she grows up?”

I had either the good fortune or misfortune of being raised by a Republican father and a Democratic mother. They cancelled each others votes over a married life that lasted more than fifty years. I’ve heard the great debates over the merits of liberal and conservative philosophy for years. Despite their differences, they believed in the need for civility and were always open to what may be best for America and her citizens – rich and poor, regardless of race, creed and social status. I often wonder why politicians can’t disagree without being disrespectful, debate and challenge without tearing down and compromise on policy without giving away their core principles in the spirit of serving a nation in need of leadership and cogent social policy.

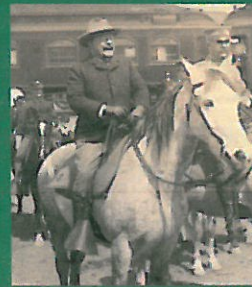
My parents taught me to love the great outdoors. Before I was twenty months old I had been pushed and carried through the Gorge Metro Park in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio which was a favorite quick hike for my parents to clear their heads from the daily stress of life in the early 50’s. We had also visited Shenandoah National Park in Virginia, Hillsborough River State Park in Florida and for good measure we met up with relatives for a vacation at Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario, Canada.

I can’t say that as a toddler those were transformational experiences for me, but I do believe that those trips molded my love of the outdoors.

As I reflect on 2010, I conclude that NASPD/America’s State Parks are blessed to have some extremely dedicated and talented people providing counsel and support to our efforts. Phil McKnelly, Tom Wolfe, Jamie Patten, Fred Lochner and Shari Boyer have all gone above and beyond the call of duty for us.

*“...the man who really counts in the world is the doer, not the mere critic – the man who actually does the work, even if roughly and imperfectly, not the man who only talks or writes about how it ought to be done.”*

-Teddy Roosevelt



Ruth Coleman, Priscilla Geigis, Dave Simon, Lewis Ledford, Chazz Salkin, John Norbeck, Courtland Nelson, Doug Hofer, Stuart Johnson, Roger Kuhn, Greg Butts, Phil Gaines and Domenic Bravo are officers, board members and committee chairs who are contributing significantly to our cause.



(L to R) T. Wolfe, R. Coleman, P. McKnelly, J. Elton, and P. Geigis)

If you want to know how far we have come in little more than a year, Google America's State Parks and marvel that our new website ranks first among the search results. When I Googled today the top three searches were ASP related, including our Imperial Multimedia produced video on combating obesity.

Consider also that in the past year, we've generated more than \$500,000 in donations since we launched our America's State Parks Foundation.

The future for America's State Parks is getting brighter as we now have 34 Youth Ambassadors representing 28 states who are contributing content and networking about the outstanding outdoor recreation opportunities in our state parks.



(check out [www.americasstateparks.org/ambassadors..html](http://www.americasstateparks.org/ambassadors..html))

In the spirit of our inspirational leader Ney Landrum – I urge us all to maintain our zeal, passion and tenacity for the great benefits state parks provide the nation.

*“Somewhere out there among the state parks fraternity there must be potential champions with a crusader’s zeal and a reformer’s impatience for action. Until they step forward there is little hope that America’s state park movement will ever be restored to its former position of influence and effectiveness.”*

Ney Landrum, Director Emeritus, Florida State Parks and former Executive Director NASPD

***My wish for America’s State Parks is a Happy, Healthy, Zealous and Prosperous New Year. Blessings to All.***



*“America’s State and National Parks provide therapy for the mind, body, and spirit and stimulate outdoor recreation and tourism spending that creates jobs and fuels our economy.”*

*Joe Elton*



January 2011