

Background Information for NSCHPO Squaretable:
“The National Park Service, Tourism, and the SHPO Perspective - A Conversation”

The material that follows represents a draft version of the “vision” and “strategies” elements of the National Park Service tourism strategic plan that is being developed by the National Tourism Council (NTC). Input on the development of this plan will be sought from SHPOs at the NCSHPO squaretable discussion scheduled for Monday February 26, 2007.

NPS Tourism Vision

The mission of the National Park Service has, from its origin, been inextricably linked to the tourism community. The "visitor enjoyment" envisioned and fostered by our founders correctly anticipated a Service which delivers relevant, high-quality visitor experiences which support our broad conservation mission through the creation of enduring physical, emotional and intellectual connections to park resources and the American legacy they represent.

People who perform tourism functions in the National Park Service at park, regional and national levels have complementary roles in working with a wide range of tourism interests and adjacent communities, and in enabling NPS leaders to be proactive partners with the tourism community locally, nationally and internationally. They foster an informed dialogue with the tourism community which provides value through establishing common ground, shared interests and principles, successful collaborations, and strong working relationships to effectively manage and promote the National Park System.

Our staffs effectively exchange information among community and business partners and colleagues within the National Park Service to ensure a greater mutual understanding and the development of better management, education, business and sustainable practices. This collaborative work includes topics such as park visitation, visitor orientation, education and interpretation, and the use of new technology. Over time, this results in a diversity of visitation which better mirrors American society and which is within the carrying capacity of park units. Additionally, a better informed public enhances our ability to properly manage and protect park resources, improves visitor satisfaction, and encourages safer visits.

Through these and other collaborative avenues, an appreciation for the breadth of the American heritage represented in the National Park System is created and strengthened with the tourism community, park visitors, and the American public.

Tourism Strategies

Given this vision five strategies emerge which connect the vision to programmatic action by the National Tourism Office and related tourism practitioners in the Service.

1. Reach out to the tourism community in a proactive approach based on identifying and confirming areas of common interest.
2. Initiate an interactive dialog with tourism community partners and with the American public to capitalize on the promise of the NPS brand.
3. Conduct visitor management exercises on a strategic basis.
4. Promote a high quality visitor experience throughout the complete spectrum of visitation.
5. Cultivate, nourish, and recognize a cultural environment throughout the Service which can recognize, anticipate, and adjust to changes in visitor needs and preferences.