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Tourism Cares Coordinates Travel Industry Support for National Parks Centennial Celebration

Canton, MA —April 24, 2015 As America prepares to celebrate the National Park- Service Centennial in 2016, Tourism Cares announces two signature programs designed to give back to its national parks --

1. *Tourism Cares for our National Parks:* A series of five industry volunteer give-back events at national park sites throughout the country, where travel industry volunteers will donate more than 10,000 hours to help preserve and protect these destinations, and
2. *The Centennial Tour Operator Program:* A cause marketing campaign for participating tour operators to donate funds in support of Tourism Cares parks programs and advocacy for our parks, and encourage their guests to do the same.

“The national parks are such vitally important demand drivers for the tourism industry,” said Mike Rea, CEO of Tourism Cares, citing two key data points from the National Park Service *2013 National Park Visitor Spending Effects*:

- US national parks generate roughly **\$14.6 billion** in annual spending in local gateway regions, driving **238,000+ jobs**.
- Annual visitor spending includes **\$4.4 billion** on lodging, **\$2.9 billion** in restaurants, **\$1.1 billion** in groceries, and **\$403 million** in retail sales.

Tourism Cares worked closely with the National Parks Foundation to identify destinations where volunteers can have a high impact, and identified five sites:–

1. **Grand Canyon National Park** (& Williams, AZ), November 1-3, 2015
2. **Chattahoochee National Recreation Area**, Atlanta, GA, February 5, 2016
3. **Mississippi National River and Recreation Area**, Minneapolis, MN, May 20, 2016
4. **Mt. Rainier National Park**, Seattle, WA, September 16, 2016
5. **Statue of Liberty National Monument** (& Ellis Island), NYC, November, 2016

At each location, volunteer work will be prioritized by the National Park Service and other local partners to fulfill the most pressing needs. US national parks see almost 300 million visitors a

year across the system, resulting in the constant need to maintain and preserve their natural, historic and cultural splendor.

Volunteers will travel from across the United States, Canada and in some cases the world, to give back to “America’s Best Idea.” These projects have been spread across the country to increase impact and allow more travel and tourism industry professionals to become involved in their regions. Registration will open for the program in September, 2015.

The Centennial Tour Operator Program (CTOP) was designed with input from industry veterans, who wanted to engage their employees and guests in giving back. Through the program, participating tour operators donate a suggested minimum of \$2/passenger on each tour departure entering a national park in 2016, and thus also raise awareness of the parks among their employees, and tour participants. Early adopters of the CTOP will be announced in May, and operators are encouraged to enroll at any time.

“More than two-thirds of NTA tour operator’s package national parks, and supporting the National Park System is one of NTA’s top legislative priorities this year,” said Pam Inman, president of NTA. “Tourism Cares programs are a great way for tour operators to show they have skin in the game.”

“This is stewardship at its finest,” said Terry Dale, president of the United States Tour Operators Association (USTOA). “Our guests will applaud this initiative and become ambassadors for the parks, tour operators and Tourism Cares.”

“These Centennial programs take the special assets of our industry and channel them for the greatest impact for our national parks and local gateway communities,” said Rea. “In addition to financial support, we’ll leverage our voice, our advocacy and our talent and influence.”

For more information about Tourism Cares’ Centennial programs, please visit www.TourismCares.org.

About Tourism Cares

Tourism Cares, Inc. is a 501(c)3 public charity that benefits society by preserving the travel experience for future generations by awarding grants to natural, cultural and historic sites worldwide; by focusing on workforce development through student programs which provide support from classroom to career; and by organizing volunteer efforts to restore tourism-related sites in need of care and rejuvenation. For additional information or to contribute to Tourism Cares, visit www.tourismcares.org.