

TESTIMONY OF
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Parks
Legislative Hearing
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Good morning. My name is Will Shafroth, and I am the President and CEO of the National Park Foundation. On behalf of the Foundation's Board of Directors, and all who love America's most treasured spaces, I would like to thank the Subcommittee for holding this hearing, and taking the time to consider S. 4168, the National Park Foundation Reauthorization Act of 2022. An identical companion bill, H.R. 7693, passed the House on July 19 with overwhelming bipartisan support.

Chartered by Congress in 1967, the National Park Foundation was founded on a legacy that began more than a century ago, when private citizens from all walks of life acted to establish and protect our national parks. Today, the National Park Foundation carries on that tradition as the only national charitable nonprofit whose sole mission is to directly support the National Park Service. Working together with the National Park Service and a dedicated community of park partners, the National Park Foundation strives to preserve what's best about our national parks and ensure that all people can connect with and enjoy them.

The success of the National Park Foundation is tied to the financial support provided by individuals, families, foundations, and corporate partners. In fiscal year 2021 that support totaled more than \$128 million. As we close the books on fiscal year 2022, we anticipate a revenue of \$166 million, including cash, pledges, and in-kind donations, with more than 73% of that directly impacting the parks.

One reason for NPF's rapid growth in recent years is its ability to leverage federal dollars. Donors want to know that their funds are being matched by federal investments. As authorized in the National Park Service Centennial Act of 2016, the National Park Foundation receives up to \$5 million in annual appropriations through fiscal year 2023, and requires the Foundation to provide a minimum of a dollar-for-dollar private match for NPS projects and programs.

Since receiving its first appropriation in fiscal year 2018, the Foundation has received a total of \$23 million in federal funds. The Foundation selects projects and matches funds, often at a greater than one-to-one ratio. For example, the Foundation received \$5 million in FY19 funds, but matched this with \$6.53 million in private funds, creating an impact of \$11.53 million in our national parks. In FY20, the \$5 million the Foundation received was matched with \$11.38 million in private funds, creating an overall impact of \$15.38 million.

Once the funds are transferred from the Treasury, which typically happens in the spring, the Foundation begins the process of matching those funds with private dollars available for programs that align with the priorities of the National Park Service. Because our donors and partners are increasingly aware of the availability of these funds, there is more interest in the power to leverage the impact of their donations as well.

Of the \$18 million received from the Treasury since fiscal year 2018, the Foundation has raised and allocated an additional \$23.8 million in matching funds for these projects. The Foundation continues the process of matching and allocating additional funds for the remainder of appropriations dollars on an ongoing basis.

To date, the Foundation has invested a combination of appropriated and private dollars to fund more than 100 projects in 32 states and 2 territories. Within the next few years, the Foundation expects to have funded projects in all 50 states and additional territories.

The National Park Foundation staff works closely with both Park Service staff and local park partners to identify priority programs and projects where investing appropriated funds can help leverage private dollars.

Examples of these types of projects include:

- Rehabilitating trails, visitor centers, and other facilities;
- Deploying service corps to build and maintain trails, eradicate invasive species, and restore historic structures;
- Engaging and educating youth;
- Conserving wildlife and their habitat;
- Expanding sustainability efforts — including reducing waste and funding EV shuttle programs in parks; and
- Restoring and improving historic and cultural resources

These funds have proven critical in addressing the parks' deferred maintenance backlog, making our parks more resilient and sustainable, and increasing access for current and future generations of parks visitors.

With increased visitation to parks and a continued gap between need and available funding across the park system, the National Park Foundation Reauthorization Act could not come at a better time. S. 4168 would reauthorize the Foundation's annual appropriation through FY 2030 and increase the authorized amount from \$5 million to \$15 million.

The Foundation is very confident that it can continue to raise substantial private funds to more than double the federal investment in park programs and projects. Should this reauthorization happen as proposed, the total impact on the parks would exceed \$30 million annually.

The Foundation anticipates continued growth in its fundraising in the coming years. Passage of the National Park Foundation Reauthorization Act will only accelerate that growth and deliver critical impact to our

parks and improve the visitor experience. This legislation puts wind in the sails of the National Park Foundation work as we seek to make our great national parks become even better.

I want to thank Senator Portman, Chairman King, and Ranking Member Daines, and for introducing the National Park Foundation Reauthorization Act, as well as those who have joined as cosponsors since.

I would like to thank the members of the committee for having me here to testify today, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.