



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of Public Affairs  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20240  
202-208-6843 phone  
202-219-0910 fax

---

## National Park Service News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
David Barna 202 208-6843  
Gerry Gaumer 220 208-4989

### Improve your Life: Be Fit, Have Fun, Get Healthy in Your National Parks

WASHINGTON – The National Park Service, with physicians and recreation experts, is writing a powerful prescription for our citizens' health. You don't have to be a tri-athlete or be into extreme sports to enjoy fun, healthy recreation in your National Parks. Parks across the country provide a wide array of healthful activities including hiking, walking and jogging, paddling, bicycling, snowshoeing and skiing, and other physically active and healthy fun.

Scientific evidence points to the fact that increasing their level of physical activity would improve Americans' overall health and well-being. "The National Park Service embraces its critical responsibility to provide appropriate outdoor recreation and to contribute to the physical and mental well-being of all Americans," said Director Fran Mainella. "We will provide these opportunities both through the National Park System itself, and through our role in a seamless network of parks. The enjoyment of and appreciation for the National Park System by our visitors is essential to its conservation."

To complement Great Outdoors Week, Director Mainella released a report that recommends ways the National Park Service can provide people with not only inspirational settings but also with opportunities to improve their overall fitness and health. The National Park System Advisory Board's Committee on Health and Recreation compiled the report. The NPS will pursue an outcome-based approach to providing and researching healthful park recreational opportunities. Seven parks are conducting health and activity research and will test the effectiveness of communications that encourage people to improve their lives by using National Parks for healthful activities. The recommendations support President Bush's *HealthierUS* Initiative, which calls on federal agencies to seek to improve information about personal fitness and to increase the accessibility of resources for physical activity.

"We believe this report will provide a framework for the NPS to promote healthful recreation activities while at the same time helping park visitors understand the importance of protecting the wide array of natural, cultural and historic resources which are to be preserved unimpaired for future generations to enjoy and appreciate," said Dr. George Willeford III, a gastroenterologist and the committee chairman.

The committee focused on ways to increase public awareness of recreation opportunities that promote individual health and wellness and on strengthening the NPS's commitment to healthy outdoor recreation and upholding the agency's conservation and stewardship mission.

-NPS-

Note: The report, *Health, Recreation and Our National Parks* is available online at:  
[www.nps.gov/pub\\_aff/healthrec\\_PDF/HEALTH&REC\\_BOARDREPORT.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/pub_aff/healthrec_PDF/HEALTH&REC_BOARDREPORT.pdf)

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.