

PARK WATCH

Making The Great Outdoors Greater

(NAPSA)—The next time you visit the great outdoors, you may feel more at home. That's because a new program is helping American national parks branch out and improve many of their services.

The Recreational Fee Demonstration program lets 137 participating national park sites retain and spend 80 percent of the entrance and user fees they collect. The remaining 20 percent goes to smaller parks and servicewide projects. The money is being spent to repair infrastructure and improve services and resources.

Between 1997 and 2001 the Recreational Fee Demonstration program has allowed the National Park Service (NPS) to approve 1,191 deferred maintenance projects at an estimated cost of \$220 million. In addition, another \$178 million was approved for much needed improvements to visitor services.

According to National Park Service Director Fran Mainella, "The Recreational Fee Demonstration program provides the NPS with additional revenue to address important deferred maintenance projects. Furthermore, because parks keep 80 percent of the revenue they collect, they see the immediate benefits at their respective parks."

Many parks with high visitation experience a great deal of wear and tear on roads, trails, restrooms and campgrounds. Revenues retained by the parks help lessen these effects.



Funds raised at many national parks are used to make them cleaner, safer and more fun for visitors.

One example is at Arches National Park where trails were rehabilitated for safer visits as well as resource protection at a cost of \$253,000.

Another example is Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument where the south rim visitor center exhibit was replaced at a cost of \$150,000.

"The additional revenue coming from park visitors provides park managers with an opportunity to ensure that the NPS' primary mission, to protect and preserve the parks' invaluable resources is achieved," said Mainella. "By charging fees, the NPS is ensuring that the nation's cultural and natural treasures under its protection remain safe and available to the public."

For more information, visit www.nps.gov.