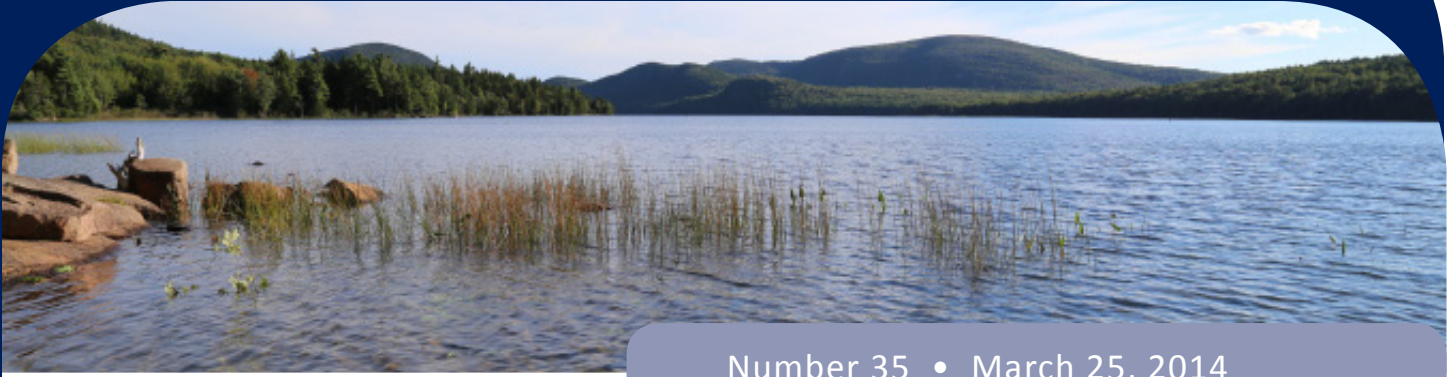


FRIENDS OF ACADIA Advocacy Alert



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PLEASE URGE CONGRESS TO PROVIDE CRITICAL FUNDING FOR NATIONAL PARKS, IN PREPARATION FOR ACADIA'S CENTENNIAL IN 2016

In a nutshell...

Congress is facing a unique moment in history to affirm the importance of national parks to our nation's heritage, recreation, and natural history. The National Park Service and Acadia National Park will celebrate their 100th birthdays in 2016. The FY 2015 budget, which Congress is currently considering, will be a critically important opportunity to invest in national parks, which have been steadily underfunded in recent years. Please urge your members of Congress to fund and restore the parks in preparation for the Centennial.

Background

President Obama recently released his FY 2015 budget in which he proposed a \$55 million increase in funding for national parks. This funding would help national parks improve interpretation, provide for visitor safety, maintain park infrastructure, protect important natural and cultural resources, increase youth engagement through the establishment of a national youth conservation service corps, and expand volunteer opportunities.

The FY 2015 budget proposal contains several exciting prospects for Acadia National Park. A \$140,000 base budget increase is recommended for the park, which would help cover rising energy costs, Congressionally-mandated pay raises, and facility operations. Additionally, if the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is fully funded in FY 2015, Acadia is recommended to receive \$776,000 to help the park acquire a parcel on Round Pond currently held by Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT) and Friends of Acadia (FOA). When the park purchases this property, FOA and MCHT will reinvest the proceeds into future land acquisitions inside park boundaries.

The President's budget proposal also recommends that Congress pass legislation to launch a centennial challenge program designed to foster public/private partnerships to invest in parks to prepare for the next century. Friends of Acadia and Acadia National Park have a long-standing partnership in which philanthropy has successfully helped preserve important park resources, such as the trails and carriage roads. The proposed challenge program would enrich this tradition and generate critical resources and support for national parks.

Action You Can Take

Please contact your members of Congress to urge them to request \$2,283,852,000 for the "Operation of the National Parks" and \$10,000,000 for the centennial challenge program in the FY 2015 budget. Be sure to mention that Acadia is targeted for a \$140K base operating budget increase and \$776K in land acquisition funding



if Congress fully funds LWCF. And, ask your Congressional representatives to partner with colleagues to support legislation to establish a longer-term centennial challenge program which will generate millions of dollars in private funding support to match Congressional appropriations for national parks.

Talking Points

- National parks are economic generators. Recent reports estimate that the 282 million visitors to national parks in 2012 spent \$14.7 billion in gateway communities, creating 243,000 jobs and \$9.3 billion in labor income. At Acadia, total visitor spending in 2012 was estimated to be almost \$201 million, creating more than 3,000 jobs and over \$92 million in labor income. Source: http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/docs%5CNPSVSE2012_final_nrss.pdf
- The government shutdown in October 2013 proved to many how important Acadia is to local communities and visitors. National parks were highlighted in more than 30,000 media stories about the negative impacts of the shut down. Visitation at Acadia was down by more than 192,000 visits in October 2013 in comparison to the average visitation of October 2010-2012. One study estimated the economic loss created by this to be as much as \$16 million, the third highest economic loss among all national parks. Source: http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/docs%5CEconomic2013ShutdownReport_Final_nrss_VSE.pdf
- Most likely voters do not want to see park budgets cut further. A July 2012 poll by the National Parks Conservation Association and the National Park Hospitality Association showed that 95% of voters felt it was an appropriate role for the federal government to protect and support national parks; 92% of voters felt that national park budgets should increase or stay the same; and 89% of voters ascribed positive characteristics (good steward of national resources, protecting America's heritage, strong on the environment, patriotic, etc.) to a candidate who supports national parks.
- National park budgets have gradually been eroded by Congress. Over the last four years, the National Park Service operating budget has been reduced by 8% in today's dollars. The National Park Service construction budget has been cut nearly in half. Yet, the National Park Service budget is a tiny 1/15th of 1% of the total national budget. Contributing to national parks is a small Congressional investment with a large positive impact. Source: National Parks Conservation Association
- The effects of these gradual budget cuts have been significant at Acadia. Acadia National Park presently has 23 permanent jobs open, including important positions such as heavy equipment operators, a wildlife biologist, and supervisory rangers. If Congress allows these cuts to continue, visitor services and the park experience will suffer as there won't be enough rangers to maintain park resources, protect park visitors, and inform visitors about all the park offers.
- The FY 2015 budget contains important proposals that will benefit Acadia. It includes a \$140K base operating budget increase for the park and a recommendation for \$776K in land acquisition funding if the Land and Water Conservation Fund is fully funded. These investments, along with the proposed centennial challenge program will help launch Acadia into its next century.

Reach out to Congress and let us know what you hear!

Go to <http://friendsofacadia.org/get-involved/advocate/state-and-federal-contacts/> to find contact information for your Congressional representatives.

For more information or to let us know about your discussions with members of Congress, contact Friends of Acadia Conservation Director Stephanie Clement at 207-288-3340 or stephanie@friendsofacadia.org.

This Advocacy Alert was sent to citizens who have expressed interest in joining the Acadia Advocacy Network. If you would like to be removed from the network, email stephanie@friendsofacadia.org with "unsubscribe" in the subject line. Thank you for your support of Friends of Acadia and for weighing in on issues of importance to Acadia National Park.