

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 6, 2007

The Honorable Mary Bomar
Director
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Director Bomar:

We write to you in a spirit of hope and concern following the recent 135th anniversary of the establishment of Yellowstone National Park. The establishment of Yellowstone signified our commitment to providing generations of Americans the opportunity to experience the natural wonders and wildlife of our national treasures in an unimpaired state. We are concerned that the newest winter management plan proposed for Yellowstone is in direct contradiction of the 2006 Management Policies endorsed by Secretary Kempthorne last year and the policies you publicly endorsed before the House Natural Resources Committee last week. We urge you to give high priority to reconciling this contradiction.

We were greatly reassured when Secretary Kempthorne announced last year that the overriding emphasis of the 2006 National Park Service Management Policies remains unchanged with his unequivocal backing. National park enthusiasts throughout the country applauded Secretary Kempthorne's commitment: "When there is a conflict between conserving resources unimpaired for future generations and the use of those resources, conservation will be predominant." We were glad to hear that you also take the management policies and well-documented scientific conclusions as the basis for your decision making as Director of the National Park Service.

Given the Secretary's and your commitment to conservation, we are troubled to learn that the National Park Service has proposed a plan for Yellowstone that is significantly at odds both with scientific conclusions and the Secretary's commitment to conservation. As you know, scientific findings are emerging from another major study of snowmobile impacts in Yellowstone – the fourth publicly-funded study of this subject in eight years. These findings confirm that increased snowmobile use in Yellowstone would place wildlife at greater risk, increase air pollution in the Park and significantly diminish the natural quiet that is a hallmark of winter visits to Yellowstone.

Specifically, your scientists have reported in detail that continued snowmobile use, especially above the current average use of 250 snowmobiles per day will:

- Increase pressures on Yellowstone's wildlife at a time of year when they are particularly vulnerable and often struggling to survive by subjecting them to greater levels of vehicular traffic than they have faced in recent winters;
- Diminish the Park's air quality by increasing carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and particulates, eroding improvements attained in the Park since 2003; and

- Extend noise from snowmobiles into more areas of the park and interfere with visitors' opportunities to enjoy Yellowstone's natural sounds and quiet during a greater portion of each day than has been the case the past three winters.

The 2006 Management Policies underscore that Yellowstone's managers must not allow these greater levels of impacts to park resources and natural conditions when there is an available alternative that provides stronger resource protection with greater opportunities for visitors to enjoy the Park's intrinsic qualities.

Visitors are increasingly opting to access and tour Yellowstone on modern snowcoaches, which are cheaper, warmer, and quieter than snowmobiles. This has led to an expansion of learning opportunities with tour operators providing knowledgeable guides on snowcoach tours to help visitors understand and appreciate Yellowstone's history, geology and wildlife. Local businesses in Yellowstone's gateway communities have added significantly to their fleets of snowcoaches, diversifying winter economies that continue to provide snowmobiling opportunities on lands adjacent to the national park.

The latest scientific findings by the NPS add new and specific details to a conclusion reached independently by the NPS and the EPA in 2000, 2003 and 2004—that snowcoach access, in addition to the advantages for visitors mentioned above, would afford greater protection to Yellowstone's air, natural soundscapes and wildlife than a policy that allows continued snowmobile use. A fourth study, with the cumulative cost to taxpayers approaching \$10 million, has verified how you, as Director, can honor and uphold the 2006 Management Policies, which state: "NPS managers must always seek ways to avoid, or to minimize to the greatest degree practicable, adverse impacts on park resources and values."

We believe that the strength of the National Park System is rooted, as Secretary Kempthorne stated last year, in an unwavering emphasis on conservation of park resources. The current proposal to ignore the best available protection offered by snowcoach access and instead to expand snowmobile use beyond the current average of 250 snowmobiles per day erodes this foundation and contradicts Secretary Kempthorne's commitment to our parks.

We urge you to work quickly to reconcile the preferred alternative for Yellowstone with the 2006 Management Policies. We look forward to supporting you in this effort.

Sincerely,



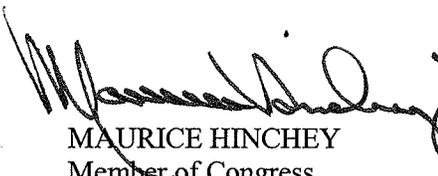
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