

United States Department of Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Northeast Region
United States Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

ELECTRONIC OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE NO HARD COPY TO FOLLOW

October 1, 2014

To: Northeast Region Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Partners
Northeast Region NPS Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Staff

Cc: Washington NPS Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Division
NPS Water Resources Division, Fort Collins, Colorado
NER Regional Directors Staff
NER Partnerships Program
SER Regional Director
SER Wekiva Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Partners
SER NPS Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Staff

Subject: Goals, Operating Principles, and Actions for Sustaining Funding of Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers (PWSR)

Everyone,

Over the last year, a number of significant issues related to the financing of NPS supported Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers have been raised. I have reviewed numerous emails and other documents and communications concerning the issues and have been briefed internally by NPS regional managers. I continue an open dialog with Bob Ratcliffe, Chief of Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Division (COR) in Washington related to these programs. We have established some goals and have agreed to explore and implement a number of measures to address some of your concerns with respect to start-up, operations, and sustainable financing of Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers.

NPS GOALS:

- Over time, bring all newly designated and established PWSRs to a uniform base operational budget of approximately \$175K per year.
- For now, sustain existing PWSR budgets at their 2014 funding levels to the extent possible.
- Enhance the capacity of PWSRs to effectively compete for NPS and other external funding sources.

BUDGET PRINCIPLES:

- **Protect Budgets for Established PWSRs.** The NPS recognizes the challenges presented when new PWSRs are established without sufficient additional appropriated funds. The NPS is committed to maintaining the funding levels for previously established PWSRs and to not decrease their budgets in order support newly designated PWSRs that are added in the future.

- **Establish Realistic Budget Expectations for New PWSRs.** There is no guarantee of immediate operating funds from the NPS upon establishment. All new PWSRs will participate in partnership development training that will make this clear.
- **Use National Coordination Funds to support strategic activities that broadly benefit PWSRs:** The Washington Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Office will continue to keep funds for National Coordination to support strategic activities that benefit PWSRs.

NPS NORTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE (NER) ACTIONS:

- **Minimize Regional Administrative Costs.** The Northeast regional office will continue to strive to keep costs for administering the PWSR program to a minimum. We plan to allocate the PWSR program budget for the Northeast Region as follows: 50% passed through directly to PWSRs via Cooperative Agreements and 50% allocated for NPS regional administrative costs and to provide NPS staff support to PWSRs.
- **Work with PWSRs to compete effectively for NPS Project Funds.** The National Park Service has several funding sources available to parks and programs to fund projects. The NPS Regional Staff will work with the PWSRs to develop project budget requests for those project funds authorized for access by the PWSRs. The funding sources currently include the NPS Challenge Cost Share Program, the Public Land Corps Program, and the NPS NER Regional Director's Contingency – Centennial Initiative Call 2 Action (C2A) Project Fund. Each funding area is competitive and each has unique and specific requirements and criteria which must be met. A description of each funding source is provided at the end of this document.
- **Offer Training Opportunities to PWSRs.** Through a partnership with The Nonprofit Center at La Salle University, the NPS Northeast Regional Office offers nonprofit training to NPS partners, National Heritage Areas and NPS staff that is also available for PWSRs. The trainings offered to date include fundraising, board development, nonprofit management, membership development and volunteer management. LaSalle is also able to work with organizations to tailor trainings to their specific needs. For more information about this program please contact Cinda Waldbuesser, Partnership Program Specialist, NERO at cinda_waldbuesser@nps.gov or by phone at 215.597.7050.

JOINT NER/WASHINGTON COR ACTIONS:

- **Work with the NPS Comptroller's Office to implement budget goals and principles.** Individual PWSR operating funding is allocated by federal appropriation. The NPS Comptroller's Office proposes the budget allocation for each river in the NPS Greenbook and then Congress accepts or makes changes. The NPS Comptroller's Office in Washington, D.C. distributes funds reflecting the final Congressional budget to the regional office for allocation to each river. NER and COR will
 - Explore opportunities to increase the Administration's proposed budget for PWSRs.
 - Explore opportunities for all of the PWSRs in the NER to share any new across-the-board base budget increase.
 - i. However, the new or underfunded PWSRs may receive a higher percentage of the increase than the established PWSR's. This achieves organizational efficiencies as well as the overall fiscal goal more expediently and with fewer overall program impacts.

- ii. Conversely any across the board decreases in the overall regional PWSR Program budget may be disproportionately absorbed by the established PWSRs with larger funding levels... the newer PWSRs with smaller individual funding levels will see a smaller percentage of any cuts.
- **Develop new funding sources for PWSRs projects.**
 - NER will commit to allocate \$50K in FY 15 funding through the Regional Directors Contingency – Centennial Initiative Call to Action program to support competitive grants in the Northeast Region for PWSR partners to implement river conservation, youth engagement and river enhancement activities.
- **Collaborate to align goals for National Coordination Funds.**

The Washington COR office will continue to use a portion of the funds as a strategic pool at the national level for micro grants, training, technical assistance and other national WSR program capacity development. Each year the Washington Office will work collaboratively with the Northeast Regional Office and its PWSR partners to determine best investment scenarios for this pool of funding.
- **Offer Communications and Capacity Building Training to NPS PWSR staff and partners.**

Beginning in February 2015, a 6-session training series from [Water Words that Work](#), will be offered. The training will include webinars, homework sessions and follow-up, tailored to the expressed needs of participants. PWSR's will receive priority for the 15 available seats.
- **Expand PWSR staff and partner access to NPS technical assistance programs and services.**

For example, the NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program provides staff technical assistance to support partners efforts to implement recreation and conservation projects and share successes through a community of practice for rivers and watersheds. More information about the program at www.nps.gov/rtca.

I believe that these goals, principles and actions will help stabilize operating budgets and bring transparency to the annual budget allocation for PWSRs. Ultimately we think this will strengthen our partnership and deliver improved resource stewardship in a more efficient and effective manner to these truly exceptional rivers. I look forward to meeting with all of you on November 10, 2014 to discuss these issues further.

Sincerely,

/S/ Mike A. Caldwell

** Challenge Cost-Share*

Program provides a maximum of 50% cost-share grant to expedite and complete mutually beneficial projects with outside sources. The purpose is to increase awareness and participation by both neighboring communities and the public at large in the preservation and improvement of National Park Service recreational, cultural, and natural resources. Park partners (outside resources) include individuals, groups, companies, corporation, State and local agencies, and other non-Federal entities which will donate funds, equipment, supplies or in-kind labor to complete a park project. Projects are generally intended to be small, able to be completed in one year, and consistent with park planning documents.

**Public Lands Corps*

The Public Lands Corps Program is designed to provide education and work opportunities for men and women between the ages of 16 and 25 years of age. The purpose of this program is to:

- Perform in a cost effective manner, appropriate conservation projects on eligible service lands where such projects will not be performed by existing employees
- Assist in performing research and public education tasks associated with natural and cultural resources on eligible service lands
- Expose young men and women to public service while furthering their understanding and appreciation of the Nation's natural and cultural resources
- Expand educational opportunities by rewarding individuals who participate in national service with an increased ability to pursue higher education or job training
- Stimulate interest among the Nation's young men and women in conservation careers by exposing them to conservation professionals in land managing agencies.

Northeast Region - Regional Directors Contingency – Centennial Initiative Call 2 Action Funds

Purpose of Contingency Account: The principal purpose of the Account is to enable the Regional Director sufficient funding flexibility to resolve specific short term park operating deficiencies and other unforeseen problems that warrant priority consideration.

"A Call to Action charts a path toward that second-century vision by asking our employees and partners to commit to concrete actions that advance the mission of the Service." A Call to Action

As we enter our next century of service for the National Park Service, the Northeast Region will look to The Call to Action to focus our efforts and align our resources in advance of our mission. Therefore, regional contingency funding will be available, on a limited basis, through FY16 to support proposals that meet the "spirit" behind Call to Action. We strongly encourage submitted proposals to be innovative, demonstrate clear outcomes, and address specific Call to Action goals. We also encourage these proposals to be bold; expand on terrific ideas; and include strategies that can be field-tested.

Because this category of request will now be considered with other legitimate contingency funding proposals, we are asking that submissions under the Call to Action category be matched dollar-for-dollar from the unit(s) and/or program(s) that is making the request. For example, if a park submitted a proposal to provide an educational program in an underserved community and needs a total of \$8,000 for start-up materials and supplies; and consequently received \$4000 from the regional office—that park or a partner, at minimum, is to provide \$4,000 as a match. ONPS or other non-NPS funds may be applied (e.g. partner, grants, etc.). Funding request under the centennial initiative will be limited to a \$10,000 maximum per project

All project submissions through this fund source must be submitted through Project Management Information System and "C2A" must be the first part of the title. Also, make sure components are "Park Submitted" so that the project can be regionally reviewed. Lastly, it is important to note that multi-park projects submissions are encouraged and will receive additional points.