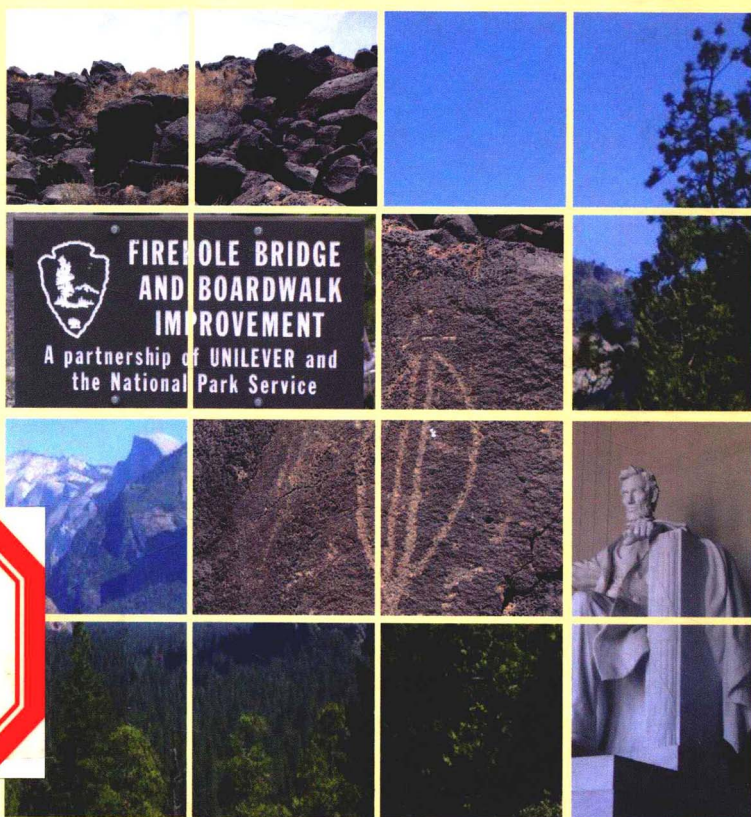
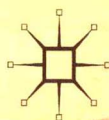

PHILANTHROPY AND THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



**Jacqueline Vaughn
& Hanna J. Cortner**

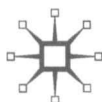


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Jacqueline Vaughn
and
Hanna J. Cortner



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To my beloved husband, Robert Easton

To Peggy Edge and the memory of Charles Edge

Preface

There is nothing so American as our national parks.

—Franklin D. Roosevelt¹

The nation's 401 national parks. More than 84 million acres in every state. A variety of places, from the nation's premier mountains, seashores, and deserts, to historically significant homes, military forts, schools, trails, farms, and canals. A performing arts center. Archeological sites from ancient cultures. Memorials to presidents, scientists, and civil rights figures. Battlefields that remind us of the costs of a nation divided by civil war, and a solemn field that marks the resting place of Flight 93, testament to more recent travails and pivotal events in the nation's history. All of this is managed by an agency, the National Park Service (NPS), with a budget of approximately \$2.50 billion and 22,000 employees. "[T]he best idea we ever had," writer Wallace Stegner declared in 1983. "Absolutely American, absolutely democratic."²

We began this project on philanthropy and the National Park Service, with its particular focus on friends groups and cooperating associations, with a curiosity about how to further the preservation of these special places. The project had its genesis in the childhood of one of the authors, Jacqueline Vaughn. Growing up in San Diego, one of her teachers introduced her to the national parks by showing slides on the wall of a classroom, while a phonograph played records that included both narration and music, such as Ferde Grofé's *Grand Canyon Suite*. For many years, the only national park she visited more than once was Yosemite, and it held a special place in her heart. In 1997, she decided it was time to revise her estate plans and asked her attorney how to bequeath money to the park. With a new job and a strongly held philanthropic ethic, she decided to make a contribution while still alive. So she started looking for the address and tax ID number the attorney needed, to start leaving a legacy sooner rather than later. Sounds simple, right?

Google wasn't available back then, so searching for Yosemite National Park in the library and on a less-developed Internet system brought up all kinds of choices: a website for the park itself, the Yosemite Fund, a Yosemite Natural History Association, the Yosemite Association, the Yosemite Museum Association, the Yosemite Institute, and Friends of Yosemite Valley. Looking further, she also learned donations could be made through the National Park Foundation, or directly to the park superintendent. Support could also be provided through the National Parks Conservation Association, or through one of the NPS partnering corporations. Which one to choose? She chose the Yosemite Fund, the park's official fundraising partner. But if you look on Google now, you'll find that in 2010 the Yosemite Fund merged with the cooperating association, the Yosemite Association, to become the Yosemite Conservancy.

Jacqueline's interest in park philanthropy grew with the advent of several developments in park policy, including President G. W. Bush's 2007 National Parks Centennial Initiative to provide additional funding for the national parks over the next ten years. The Centennial Initiative had been developed in preparation for the one hundredth anniversary of the Park Service in 2016, and it came on the heels of congressional inquiries into fundraising, partnerships, and the commercialization of national parks. Park philanthropy through private-public partnerships was raising some troubling policy and administrative issues.

In the summer of 2009, having just received one of the periodic requests for donations from the Yosemite Fund, Jacqueline began to ask more questions about the group and projects to which her donations were going and the issues surrounding park philanthropy, an interest that bloomed into a topic for an upcoming sabbatical. During a return trip to Yosemite with Hanna Cornner where they saw some of the beneficial results of the Yosemite Fund's efforts, they discussed the possibility of collaborating on the project. Although a firm believer in the values embodied in the national park system, Hanna had never written a check to a specific park or a friends group, and had concerns about the slippery slope of relying upon private sources for park funding.

Together, we began this project not only for our own edification, but also because we felt that partnerships are one key to understanding the current operations of many natural resource agencies. In a time of fiscal cliffs, sequesters, and philosophies of government built on citizen participation, transparency, and shared decision making, it is apparent that it is all about managing more with less. The trustees

of the nation's vast array of land and water resources will need all the philanthropic partners and friends they can get.

At first, we broadly framed the research task around the question, "How do park partners philanthropically support national parks and with what benefits and challenges?" Like most research studies, we then undertook a literature search. This led to months of preliminary research on partnerships, constituency building, and NPS history, organization, and administration. Although that work was helpful and essential for understanding the historic sources of support for park establishment and operations, such as that provided by the railroads and the tourist industry, and in providing context for the particular park philanthropy of friends groups and cooperating associations, two things became apparent: first, very little had been written that directly addressed NPS philanthropy and park partnerships, and second, the definition of "park partner" is much more complicated and imprecise than one might at first realize. After encountering the many and varied kinds of partnerships described in chapter 1, we decided to limit our research parameters to friends groups and cooperating associations, the two types of non-governmental and nonprofit philanthropic partners established primarily to assist or benefit a specific park area, a series of park areas, or national park program.

During the study's literature search phase, we did find a few particularly relevant journal articles, PhD dissertations, and nonprofit organization sources that specifically addressed park partners. This included two dissertations on local population engagement and friends groups (specifically with Virgin Islands National Park), and several surveys. The surveys, which will be discussed further in chapter 4, provided useful statistical snapshots of friends groups and changes in their makeup and activities over time. But the surveys, by themselves, failed to offer the kind of robust portrait of the landscape inhabited by the Park Service and its friends that was clearly lacking in the literature. We wanted to move beyond numbers and quantitative analysis to narratives and qualitative analysis.

We also reviewed the work of the Center for Park Management, part of the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), whose report, *Best Practices in Friends Groups and National Parks*, originated from a request from a NPS superintendent.³ This study, published in September 2005, provided us with an initial overview of the interaction between the Park Service and philanthropic organizations that support national parks, and guided us in our selection of some of the park units we would study ourselves. The NPCA also identified six best practices that the organization could share with the Park Service

and friends groups, something that we decided not to duplicate in our research.

We then contacted the Washington Office of the National Park Service to obtain basic background data and information on friends and cooperating associations. It was anticipated that the NPS Partnerships Office and the NPS Partnership Council would serve as the best source of information on friends groups and cooperating associations. However, our timing of the study did not anticipate a major reorganization of the NPS Partnerships Office, proposed changes in friends group agreements, or significant staff changes. Nor did we anticipate that the Park Service itself was lacking the types of data we had hoped to access: basic information on the number of friends groups, current lists or directories of friends groups and cooperating associations, annual reports, or up-to-date financial statements on what is commonly referred to as “aid to parks”—one measure of how partners support an individual park unit.

After this initial investigation of resources, we began to look elsewhere for more information, contacting the NPCA, the National Park Foundation, the Western National Parks Association, the Association of Partners for Public Lands, National Parks Friends Alliance, an existing contact we had within a friends group, and regional Park Service partnership coordinators. This initial data-gathering effort convinced us that the best approach from that point on would be to carry out our research by visiting as many park units as possible and interviewing park superintendents and their partners on a one-on-one basis.

Since the travel budget for the research was limited, we developed a nongeneralizable “opportunity sample” of groups and park units, rather than trying to draw an entirely random sample or a stratified random sample to ensure inclusion of every state, region, or park unit type. Our opportunity sample often meant fitting an interview in along with otherwise personal travel as well as planning several trips specifically around a series of interviews. When personal on-site interviews were not possible, we chose to interview partners or NPS staff by telephone. Within the limits of our resources, we did, however, attempt to make sure that our sample was as inclusive as possible. As the interview process proceeded, adjustments were made to insure that we included all types of park units, from the large “crown jewel” national parks to smaller national historical sites, all NPS regions, parks without friends groups, and parks just starting friends groups. Slicing the sample from the perspective of the cooperating associations and friends groups, we included cooperating associations that served only a single park as well as those with a multi-region or multi-park focus, and friends groups

from small, all-volunteer groups to groups with multimillion dollar endowments and operating budgets. We also included groups that thought they were an official friend but weren't, as well as those who knew they weren't but acted as friends, nonetheless.

A total of 58 semi-structured interviews were conducted, including 30 interviews with representatives of friends groups or cooperating associations, 16 with national park superintendents, and 12 with other NPS personnel or individuals affiliated with other park partners. Because some interviews involved more than one person, the number of persons actually interviewed is higher than 58. Additional site visits were made to park units where no formal interviews were conducted, but where materials were collected or facilities and projects reviewed. (A list of parks visited and groups contacted is given in the Appendix.) To encourage candor, we promised anonymity to all those interviewed unless the material was in the public domain, or unless we recontacted the individual to receive permission when any quote was obvious enough to show to whom it could be attributed. We believed that the information and perspectives they provided would be straightforward and more valuable when not tainted by organizational norms or political pressure. Data gathered from the fieldwork/interviews comprise the heart of the study.

Keeping track of park benefactors is difficult. The groups are in a constant state of flux as their agreements with the Park Service are renegotiated or terminated, or as the group evolves, changes names, or ceases to exist. Although the study made every attempt to be accurate in identifying the nonprofit organizations that are the "official" friends groups and cooperating associations, the numbers of partners and their leaders may change by the time the reader picks up this book. We do believe, however, that the data gathered over the past several years paint a more robust portrait of past and current national park philanthropy than previously available for the Park Service, scholars, and the partners themselves.

Had our resources and time allowed, we would have wanted to visit every park unit that houses a cooperating association and/or friends group. We would have enjoyed the opportunity to sift through the historical records of Mather, or the Union Pacific Railroad, to see how the nation's initial support for national parks was cultivated. We had hoped to interview wealthy park benefactors like the Rockefellers, or the Haas family, or participate in the annual conference of the Association of Partners for Public Lands. But those ideas and dreams aside, we do feel this book makes a major contribution to what we know about non-governmental support for the national parks.

We would like to acknowledge the assistance we received from those we interviewed as a part of this study. We truly appreciate the time and the materials they made available to us. We also wish to thank our colleague, Frederic I. Solop of Northern Arizona University, who willingly provided his knowledge of the Park Service in reviewing the complete draft manuscript, and to Ron Foresta of the University of Tennessee and an anonymous reviewer who provided comments on the draft manuscript to Palgrave Macmillan. We have been the beneficiaries of the support of Editor Brian O'Connor of Palgrave Macmillan, who shepherded the project through the acquisition process, his editorial assistant Scarlet Neath, and the editorial team who brought the manuscript to fruition. Finally, we want to thank those individuals and organizations who support the country's national parks in so many ways, stretching government and philanthropic dollars and resources so that we can continue to marvel at "America's Best Idea."

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Chapter 1

Philanthropy through Park Partnerships

When President Woodrow Wilson signed the National Park Service Act in 1916, he brought 36 national parks, monuments, and reservations under a single federal agency, the National Park Service (NPS). A number of disparate units that earlier had mostly been cared for by the military would henceforth be managed by the new agency to “conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”¹ What developed over the next century was a complex system of partnerships, internal and external to the Park Service, designed to meet the two prongs of the agency’s dual, and often conflicting, mandate of preservation and visitor enjoyment. As the agency grew from managing the 36 units to today’s 401, so did the array of partnership arrangements. One significant role that many partnerships have assumed is philanthropic, raising money to donate to the agency as a supplement to the appropriations provided by Congress.

Today many NPS units depend on park-specific, philanthropic nonprofit partners, called friends groups, for fundraising, and there are currently about 185 friends to choose from. But not every park has a friends group, and some groups support more than one park. In addition, most national parks are served by one of the approximately 70 cooperating associations, legal entities that are older than friends groups (the first was the Yosemite Association, established in 1923). As partners, cooperating associations have a decidedly educational mission, operating bookstores and publishing interpretative materials, and directing their proceeds to the national parks. Within the overall

context and historical background of park philanthropy through park partnerships, this study examines the legal and organizational frameworks within which friends and cooperating associations operate, the diverse roles they play in the operation and maintenance of park units, and the issues and challenges they and the parks encounter. But before delving into the specifics of how philanthropic partnerships between the Park Service and its friends groups and cooperating associations function, which is explained in chapters 3–6, it is first necessary to understand more fully the contours of the partnership concept as well as the historical evolution of park philanthropy in general, which forms the crux of this chapter and chapter 2.

Defining Partners

Thanks Pardner!

Yes, YOU! By paying the entrance fee, you are partnering with the National Park Service through the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act Program at Devils Tower National Monument. Your entry fees are used to support improved signage and building restoration.

Other partners include the Black Hills National Forest, Black Hills Youth Conservation Corps, Black Hills National Forest Tribal Youth Conservation Corps, Montana Conservation Corps, Student Conservation Association, American Conservation Experience, Hulett and Crook County Emergency Response, Bear Lodge Alternative High School, Christian Motorcycle Association, Crook County Sheriff Department, Access Fund, Wyoming Department of Transportation, Boy Scouts of America, Bearlodge Writers, and the many park climbing guides. Thanks for helping us out.²

Thus the Devils Tower National Monument's official newspaper publication, *The Tower Columns*, gives an account of the partners it relies upon. Immediately below these acknowledgments is a paragraph highlighting the monument's cooperating association, the Devils Tower National History Association, and its work, operating the bookstore in the visitor's center, whose profits help the Wyoming park support the Junior Ranger program, interpretive exhibits, and a cultural program series. A membership form for the partner sits alongside the description.

So what is a partnership? The term is a deceptively complex one. The US Department of the Interior (DOI), the cabinet department in which the Park Service resides, notes that "almost any time that a

federal or non-federal entity is working together with the Department, that working relationship may be considered a partnership.”³ Within the Park Service and among its stakeholders, “partnership” is used loosely and frequently to describe almost any type of associational relationship. The entrance fee-paying park visitor is a partner, as are individuals who drop a small donation in a donation box inside the park, make a sizeable bequest, or volunteer their time to work in the parks. Apart from these people, groups with formal and congressionally authorized status to work cooperatively with the agency (e.g., cooperating associations, National Park Foundation), are partners. Other federal agencies, both within and outside the DOI, particularly those agencies that share resource management responsibilities, including, for example, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) within the DOI and the Forest Service within the Department of Agriculture, are also considered partners.

State and local units of governments can also be counted as partners in a number of ways: through official cooperative management agreements, through agreements to provide services to parks or programs, through programs where the Park Service provides technical assistance (such as the Historic American Buildings Survey program) as well as planning assistance,⁴ or simply through informal consultations and cooperation. Private interest groups organized specifically and solely to advocate nationally on behalf of parks (e.g., the National Parks Conservation Association [NPCA]), or to benefit one or more parks (e.g., friends of the park groups), are partners too, as are national, regional, or locally based private interest groups organized around other issues not related to a national park but who engage in some type of activity benefiting a park. Thus, in addition to such well-known conservation and environmental groups as the Nature Conservancy or the Sierra Club, groups as diverse as the Boy Scouts, the Christian Motorcycle Association, or a local writers’ group may be included as a park partner.

There are a myriad other partnership arrangements involving non-profit organizations. San Francisco-based NatureBridge, founded as the Yosemite Institute in 1971, offers national park-based overnight field science programs in Yosemite, Olympic, and Channel Islands national parks, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The organization merged with the Headlands Institute and Olympic Park Institute in 2012, and now serves an estimated 30,000 participants each year. NatureBridge is working with the Park Service to develop a \$43 million environmental education center in Yosemite. Another entity, the Udall Foundation,

coordinates a Parks in Focus program giving middle school youth from underserved communities an opportunity to use photography to learn about nature in the national parks. Universities and other research and educational institutions may interact through the national network of the Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units that conduct collaborative and interdisciplinary applied projects, or may work more informally on a project-to-project basis. Finally, corporate and business entities (e.g., concessioners, companies that make donations or engage in fundraising campaigns, travel agencies, and chambers of commerce) are also considered partners. The National Parks Promotion Council, for instance, helps establish cooperative partnerships with state tourism offices, gateway communities, destination marketing organizations, and travel companies that provide services related to the national parks.

Thus, one might just as easily ask: just who isn't a partner? The NPS's *Management Policies 2006* indicates that the "Service will embrace partnership opportunities that will help accomplish the NPS mission provided that personnel and funding requirements do not make it impractical for the Service to participate and the partnership activity would not (1) violate legal or ethical standards, (2) otherwise reflect adversely on the NPS mission and image, or (3) imply or indicate an unwillingness by the Service to perform an inherently governmental function."⁵ The Park Service may partner, for example, with corporations in campaigns to raise money, but such fundraising campaigns cannot identify the NPS with alcohol or tobacco products.⁶

Partnership Benefits

Management Policies stresses the benefits of partnerships to the agency: "Through these partnerships the Service has received valuable assistance in the form of educational programs, visitor services, living history demonstrations, search-and-rescue operations, fundraising campaigns, habitat restoration, scientific and scholarly research, ecosystem management, and a host of other activities."⁷ The focus areas for partnerships are just as varied as the forms of partnerships. In addition to the areas included in the *Management Policies* description noted above, the agency's partnership website has posted case studies of partnerships in the following areas: arts, capital improvements, community relations, concessioners, cultural resources, design, education/interpretation, facility management, fire management, fundraising, information services, mutual aid, natural resources management/restoration, planning, program delivery, tenant organizations, tourism, trails, transportation, visitor services, and other.⁸ The importance

of such partnerships is increasingly stressed by politicians, resource managers, scholars, and interested members of the public, as a necessary and desirable tool for doing business.⁹

Partnerships provide financial support for things a park is prohibited from doing or cannot afford to do with its allotted budget, whether that be updating signage, building new visitor facilities, restoring buildings or habitats, or providing food for volunteers. Partners can bring additional expertise to assist in interpretation, education, and research, and serve as independent ombuds to watch over park priorities and programs. They can be active and powerful constituencies that promote the agency's mission, argue for its budgets, and broaden the political base of support nationally and with nearby communities. The agency's partners benefit from an alliance with the Park Service because it advances their agenda, whether it is dedication to the scenic, ecological, cultural, or historical reasons for establishing the park, or organizational development purposes, such as enhancing public image, growing the membership base, or building political power and prestige.

Partnerships are also a mechanism by which lands are added to the national park system. For instance, several partners came together to fund and purchase 623 acres of land near California's Joshua Tree National Park, where developers planned to build 2,400 homes in 2013. The \$1.4 million for the purchase of the large parcel came from the California Wildlife Conservation Board and the nearby Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center in Twentynine Palms as part of the Department of Defense's Readiness Environmental Protection Initiative. The federal program helped two other partners, The Trust for Public Land and the Mojave Desert Land Trust, to purchase the conservation easement. The easement protects a key aviation corridor in an area known as the Joshua Tree North Linkage that extends about 11 miles from the north end of the national park to the Marine base. The Gateway Parcel is also a migratory corridor for wildlife and includes more than 10,000 Joshua trees. Another partner, a Wells Fargo real estate division, helped the groups with an extended agreement while they completed the fundraising to acquire the land.¹⁰

A similar multi-stakeholder partnership at Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona added the McCauley Ranch parcel to the park, protecting what one partner called "exceptional" and "irreplaceable" prehistoric resources. The efforts of The Conservation Fund and the NPCA added 4,265 acres to the 119,000 acre site, which is also valuable for its underground reserves of potash, a key ingredient in making fertilizers. The potash is estimated to be about 1,000 feet below the surface, and could potentially generate millions of dollars

in royalties, although the purchase does not convey mineral rights to the Park Service. What is especially important about the acquisition, however, is that the purchase was already part of the Petrified Forest Expansion Act of 2004, which authorized the Park Service to acquire more than 125,000 acres of state and private lands that form a crazy quilt that crisscrosses the area. But Congress failed to appropriate more money for the acquisition of new land, forcing the NPS to use its own limited resources or rely on philanthropic partners to do so for it. The agency had previously attempted to purchase another ranch on the park's boundary, but negotiations failed when the NPS could not come up with the \$20 million in funding. A Canadian mining company reached an agreement with the ranch owners to buy both the land and the mineral rights attached to it, although park officials hoped the deal might fall through, or that they could someday acquire the surface rights by themselves.¹¹

Without these partnerships, whether for fundraising, friend-raising, political assistance, financial management, or media coverage of a park's needs, these land acquisitions likely would not have taken place. The partners worked together to forge alliances outside the governmental sphere that all parties agreed would benefit the national parks and the public that enjoys and visits them. The parties recognized that time was of the essence in preserving the land from future development that might destroy or damage valuable artifacts, viewsheds, wildlife and plants, or other natural resources that cannot be replaced or restored. While the partners worked closely with the Park Service in determining the parks' needs and priorities, they also worked side by side in ways that avoided at least some of the political and bureaucratic barriers that might have stopped the land purchases had they been attempted internally by the agency.

Establishing Partnerships

Some partnerships have a legislative basis. Examples include the 1946 legislative act that statutorily authorized cooperating associations, the National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998 that enables the Park Service to enter into cooperative management agreements for federal, state, and local park areas adjacent to a national park unit, and the National Park Service Concessions Management Improvement Act of 1998 that governs commercial visitor services within the parks (e.g., lodging, food, tours, and guide services).

Partnerships in support of parks and recreation areas historically have been encouraged by the federal government, including the 1986