

NPS "Non-essential" Status Insulting to Employees who Fight Wildfires, Protect Borders, Respond to Terrorist Threats, Rescue Hikers and Respond to Natural Disasters

WASHINGTON, Sept. 30, 2013 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Coalition of National Park Service Retirees (CNPSR) deplores Congress for the partisan politics currently risking a government shutdown, and jeopardizing the livelihood of nearly one million public servants, including thousands of National Park Service (NPS) Employees.

Our National Parks have been a part of the American way of life for over 141 years, and NPS has withstood the test of time and fluctuating budgets. Our parks will be there when this crisis is over. Still, it is a sad day when Congress acts in such a self-serving way -- when a small handful of members manufacture a budget crisis and are willing to shut the entire federal government down despite the damage it will cause.

Beginning tomorrow morning, parks across the US will be closing their gates and not allowing visitors to enter. As NPS prepares to close parks across the country, visitors in hotels and campgrounds - those already staying overnight on NPS grounds - will be allowed a transition of one or two days to exit. Despite the national media coverage, there are still backcountry park users, including mountaineers, who will be at great risk without National Park Service employees on duty.

Joan Anzelmo, a former NPS park superintendent and spokesperson for CNPSR said: **"The term 'non-essential' has been connected to National Park Service employees in many national news stories lately in the run-up to the government shutdown. Therefore, we want to take this opportunity to remind every American that if the potential shutdown occurs, it will require furloughing people who fight explosive wildfires, save lives in outdoor accidents, rescue injured climbers on mountain peaks, search for lost children, respond to terrorist threats, protect US borders, and rush into places devastated by hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, fires and floods to help their fellow man. NPS does this vital work and so much more day in and day out, year-round."**

The parks are robust economic generators for their communities and states. NPS now protects

and manages some 401 units and welcomes more than 260 million visitors annually. Nationwide, national parks support local economies in a significant way, generating \$31 billion in private sector spending and 258,000 private sector jobs each year. Many parks are located in rural areas that are very dependent on these expenditures to maintain a healthy economy.

The exercise federal agencies must go through, first to gear up for a shutdown, and the costs to actually shut agencies and facilities down is estimated at more than one billion dollars. Then there is the gearing back up to restore the services and facilities to operational levels. This is a huge waste of taxpayer money and staff time.

Those in Congress who welcome a shutdown in order to send an ideological message must recognize that a government shutdown should not be used as leverage in a national policy debate. Federal agencies provide a national infrastructure of employees who carry out vital work every day in their respective fields. In national emergencies, this workforce makes the difference between life and death. The collective federal workforce, including NPS, provides a vital capacity to our nation in times of national emergencies and disasters.

CNPSR and National Park Service retirees from every corner of the country urge Congress to end this dangerous folly and do everything possible to prevent a shutdown of the federal government.

SOURCE Coalition of National Park Service Retirees, Washington, D.C.