

National Park Service

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



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News & Blogs

[Rick Potts says farewell](#), leaving Park Service's Conservation + Recreation progs. Read Rick's goodbye message [here](#).

African Americans in the Parks: Hear this [engaging "Promised Land" podcast](#) and read [thoughtful listener comments](#)

\$340K will help Connect Trails to Parks

Keep Connected

[Meet the Apprentices](#) AmeriCorps and SCA are placing at least 9 young professionals with NPS mentors. The Apps will engage youth in local con + rec projects throughout the coming year. [More...](#)

Conservation + Recreation: February 2011

Parks + Bikes = Connection

There is great riding to be had in our national parks. A bike rider is more open to the environment and more aware of their surroundings than is possible from inside a motor vehicle. Plus, the bike can cover more ground than two feet alone, and riders can easily stop to appreciate wildlife or scenery.

Cycling is friendly to the environment in the parks and to the health of the rider. These qualities bring cycling in line with the goals of the National Park Service and help make bicycling a great way to visit the parks.

But not everyone who might like to experience the parks by bike gets the chance to. In some cases, visitors don't realize that cycling is allowed. For others, it's difficult enough just to get to a national park, to say nothing of arriving with a bike. A growing number of national parks are helping bridge that gap with rental programs, bike sharing, and bike tours for visitors.

[Grand Canyon National Park](#) gets over five million visitors every year, and clearly some of those visitors want to see the park in a different way. [Bright Angel Bicycles](#) obliges them. It's the first bike rental facility to be located on the popular South Rim of the park, and provides a fun and safe service to visitors while helping sustain the park's natural resources and lessening the impact of visitors on the park's environment.



"We got turned away a couple of times when we tried to do this," says Wes Neal, owner of Bright Angel Bicycles. "But we had a vision and we stuck to it. That's the key to our success. We knew it was going to make the park better and improve the overall visitor experience. And that's the park's goal, too."

Bike rental and interpretive bike tours at the Canyon are a big hit with the visiting public. The feedback has been very positive, and people are enjoying the chance to see much more of the park than they could if

Get Involved

Invite [Your Town](#) to your town for help with rural community planning

Form a team in your "gateway community" and learn about [Balancing Nature and Commerce](#)

Local bike shops help create Safe Routes to School -- [free webinar](#)

Jobs

Marketing+comm.: [Northern Forest Canoe Trail](#)
Work for the [National Park Service](#)

Grants

EPA has [\\$2M for pollution reduction](#) through local action

Events

Get urban at the RTC [Urban Pathways Summit](#)

See what **1000 cyclists** looks like at the [National Bike Summit](#)

[Meet new partners + learn new tools \(more\)](#)

they were walking or driving, and getting fresh air and exercise in the bargain. A bike shuttle service, with drop-off and pickup, is quite well received too, as there is one climb that can cause trouble for riders not used to riding at 7,000 feet.

From the park's perspective it's been a hit, as well. Visitor who bike help reduce auto traffic and congestion on park buses, both systems nearly overloaded by the popularity of the park. Bright Angel submits a monthly report about to keep park staff up-to-date on rental activities and challenges that arise (which, thankfully, haven't been many).

In the future, Bright Angel hopes to introduce "smart bikes", allowing visitors to swipe a card and check out a bike and helmet at several locations in the park. And they're hoping to work with the park on a staff bike-sharing program, since many park personnel already ride their bikes to work.

The goal of bicycling in national parks is not extreme speed or thrills, but quiet, nonpolluting transportation and a deeper visitor experience. For visitors seeking the sense of freedom, energy, and healthfulness that the national parks embody, two wheels can be just the right speed.

Not Just for Visitors: Bikes At Work

It's not only visitors who think bikes are a practical and enjoyable way to move through parks. Here is a small sample of places where Park Service staff choose two wheels as a way to patrol and manage park areas and maintain close access to visitors, all while avoiding the environmental impact of using motor vehicles for short work trips

Super fat-tired bikes can [cross the snowy winter landscapes](#) of Alaska with surprising speed and agility -- faster, in many cases, than a dogsled. But [Lake Clark National Park and Preserve](#), where 30 miles of Cook Inlet coastline need to be periodically patrolled and inspected, rangers have found that "snow bikes" also work remarkably well on wet sand. Now park staff do the job without burning fossil fuel or making noise. (Can you picture it yet? Then enjoy [this video moment of bliss.](#))

[Zion National Park](#) in Utah boasts a popular and [bike-friendly shuttle system](#) for visitors traveling up and down the canyon, which has greatly reduced car traffic and made the canyon road [a joy to bike on](#). Teamed with the Pa'Rus Trail, bikes and shuttles make an easy connection between the town of Springdale and the heart of the park. Now, the park also has a "Green Fleet" -- 17 bicycles that let park employees, volunteers, and partners pedal the many short daily trips they need to take between the Visitor Center, Nature Center, Administration Building, and other operational facilities. As additional bikes have been



donated to the fleet, seasonal and volunteer workers are now able to ride to their work locations from their housing area rather than drive cars or face a long walk.

At the [National Mall](#) in Washington, D.C., staff use bikes routinely as a practical way to patrol and cover ground fast in an expansive but sometimes congested urban park. Nearly 50 staff from the Mall and nearby NPS areas have been trained by the League of American Bicyclists' program of ["Drivers Ed" for biking](#). Now, the Mall's park rangers are safe, competent, and confident bicyclists in an urban setting, as well as "roll-models" of safe, respectful cycling behavior. (They lead great [visitor tours by bike](#), too!)

Let's Work Together

Could your project benefit from collaboration with a National Park Service specialist?

If you're restoring a river, building a community trail, or making an urban park flourish, we'd love to talk with you about ways we could work together.

Call or email your [regional representative](#) today.

NPS Conservation and Recreation Links

| [Federal Lands to Parks](#) | [Hydropower Relicensing Program](#) | [Land and Water Conservation Fund](#) | [National Trails System](#) | [Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers](#)
[Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program](#) | [Urban Park and Recreation Recovery](#)

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Conservation + Recreation is written to support and inform our organizational partners, friends of the program, potential partners, and Department of the Interior staff. It's our chance to share activities and successes and those of our partners. For details on specific projects, please contact the staff person involved with each project.

Images courtesy National Park Service

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