

Weekly Address: Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the National Park Service

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Hi everybody.

Earlier this summer, Michelle, Malia, Sasha and I headed west—to the national parks at Carlsbad Caverns and Yosemite. And I've got to say, it was a breath of fresh air. We explored hundreds of feet underground, standing beneath dripping stalactites in New Mexico. We hiked up a misty trail next to a waterfall in California. And I even took a few pictures of my own – not bad, right?

But the truth is, no camera – especially one with me behind it – can fully capture the beauty and majesty of America's national parks. From Glacier and Denali to Gettysburg and Seneca Falls, our more than 400 parks and other sites capture our history and our sense of wonder. As FDR once said: "There is nothing so American as our national parks... the fundamental idea behind the parks... is that the country belongs to the people."

This month, we're celebrating the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service. And I want to encourage all of you to "Find Your Park" so that you and your family can experience these sacred places, too. If you're a military family, you can even get in free through Michelle and Jill Biden's Joining Forces initiative. And if you've got a fourth grader in your family, you can get a free pass, too, by going to EveryKidInAPark.org.

I hope you do. Because all across the country, the National Park Service is preparing for a big year. We're revitalizing a grove of giant Sequoias in Yosemite; repairing the Lincoln Memorial; and enhancing the iconic entrance to our first national park at Yellowstone.

As President, I'm proud to have built upon America's tradition of conservation. We've protected more than 265 million acres of public lands and waters – more than any administration in history. We've recovered endangered wildlife species and restored vulnerable ecosystems. We've designated new monuments to Cesar Chavez in California, the Pullman porters in Chicago, and the folks who stood up for equality at Stonewall in New York – to better reflect the full history of our nation. And we've got more work to do to preserve our lands, culture, and history. So we're not done yet.

As we look ahead, the threat of climate change means that protecting our public lands and waters is more important than ever. Rising temperatures could mean no more glaciers in Glacier National Park. No more Joshua Trees in Joshua Tree National Park. Rising seas could destroy vital ecosystems in the Everglades, even threaten Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty.

So in the coming years and decades, we have to have the foresight, and the faith in our future, to do what it takes to protect our parks and protect our planet for generations to come. Because these parks belong to all of us. And they're worth celebrating – not just this year, but every year. Thanks everybody. Have a great weekend. And see you in the parks!