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March 31, 2014

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

The National Park System has been described by many as "America's best idea" and our country's crown jewels. Unfortunately, many of our National Park Units are in a state of disrepair. Last year alone, the National Park Service (NPS) delayed more than a quarter billion dollars in much needed maintenance projects, adding another substantial sum to the over $11.5 billion deferred maintenance backlog already threatening the health, safety, and accessibility of park visitors. To address this serious problem, we have been exploring various avenues to work towards reducing the maintenance backlog, including a comprehensive review of the National Park Service's administrative structure.

In the current fiscally-constrained environment, effective allocation of resources is especially important and it is our understanding that a formal review of the National Park Service has never been conducted. To provide Congress with a more complete understanding of the NPS' structure and potential opportunities for administrative savings and improved efficiencies throughout the agency, we ask that GAO undertake a formal review of the National Park Service. Such a review will allow lawmakers to make informed, fiscally responsible decisions in support of our National Park System, while addressing the systematic issues that have resulted in the current maintenance backlog.

To ensure that the National Park Service is operating at optimal level of efficiency, while reducing redundancy and increasing administrative savings, we request that GAO conduct a series of reviews addressing the following key issues:

1. A formal review of the National Park Service's administrative structure to identify and address any inefficiencies, redundancy, and opportunities for administrative savings.
2. A review of the Recreation Fee program within the National Park Service, including a report detailing the NPS' expenditure of fee receipts and a review of how spending prioritization decisions are made.
3. Options for how the National Park Service can reduce its current Deferred Maintenance Backlog, including identification of underutilized revenue sources and suggestions for improving revenue streams.

We appreciate your attention to this request. If you have any questions, please have your staff contact Kaleb Froehlich (Kaleb_Froehlich@energy.senate.gov) on Senator Murkowski's staff, Bryan Berky (Bryan_Berky@Coburn.senate.gov) on Senator Coburn's staff, or Darrin Munoz (Darrin_Munoz@Enzi.senate.gov) on Senator Enzi's staff.

Sincerely,

Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

Dr. Tom Coburn
United States Senator

Mike Enzi
United States Senator