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Secretary Jewell, Director Jarvis Announce Initiative to Offer Additional Healthy, Sustainable Food Choices at Parks

Nutritious, Affordable Food Options for Park Visitors to be Offered Nationwide

WASHINGTON – Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell today joined National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis, *Let's Move!* Executive Director and White House Senior Policy Advisor on Nutrition Sam Kass, and executives and chefs of major concessioners to announce that visitors will have additional choices for purchasing healthy, nutritious food at national parks across the country.

“Our national parks are renowned around the world for their breathtaking landscapes and important cultural and historical sites,” Jewell said. “Today, as part of the administration’s efforts to promote healthier choices, we are adding yet another reason to visit our national parks and increasing the number of healthy food options available to visitors at parks from coast to coast.”

As part of the Healthy Parks, Healthy People initiative, Director Jarvis issued healthy food standards and sustainable food guidelines that will increase the number of menu items available at more than 250 food and beverage operations in national parks.

“There is no reason that you should have to take a vacation from eating well when you visit a national park,” said Jarvis. “Traditional favorites such as hot dogs and ice cream will remain, but the new standards will provide additional choices, such as fish tacos and yogurt parfaits, for the 23 million people who buy meals in national parks each year.”

The agency collaborated with park food and beverage operators, concession industry leaders and health experts to develop the standards, which will be integrated into all new concessions contracts and applied on a voluntary basis to existing contracts. Many concessioners are embracing the Healthy Parks, Healthy People connection and are working with parks to display new signs and nutritional data, including calorie counts, to help customers make informed decisions.

“Providing additional choices is good for our customers and good for our business,” said Gerry Gabrys, Chief Executive Officer of Guest Services, Inc. who spoke on behalf of the concessioners. “All of us have seen a growing consumer demand for healthy food and we are committed to meeting the needs and desires of park visitors while keeping prices affordable. The new guidelines include many efforts already underway by the industry and reflect the close collaboration and positive partnership we enjoy with the National Park Service.”

The new program includes incentives and recognition opportunities for concession companies that exceed the standards and demonstrate leadership in improving the visitor experience.

Jewell and Jarvis made the announcement at an event on the National Mall featuring executives and chefs from four major concessioners – Xanterra Parks and Resorts, Guest Services, Inc., Aramark Parks and Destinations, and Delaware North Companies Parks & Resorts – who served samples of the new menu items.

“We all have a role to play in building a healthier nation, and improving the offerings at parks across the country is an important step towards making the healthier choice the easier choice for parents and kids,” said Kass. “Our beautiful national parks are a fun way for families to get active together this summer, and now families will also be able to enjoy many healthy food options as part of their visit to the great outdoors. I look forward to eating a healthy meal in a national park this summer myself!”

In addition to providing more nutritious food options, the National Park Service is encouraging concessioners to incorporate sustainable food sourcing and service practices. The use of locally grown or raised items, when available, provides fresh food, reduces environmental impacts, and supports regional economies.

Already, concessioners in parks like Yellowstone and Mount Rushmore are working with local vendors to supply a variety of seasonal ingredients, from fish, beef, bread, and tomatoes to dairy products, blueberries, cage-free eggs, and vegetables. Mount Rushmore’s “Lakota Popcorn” is from the harvest of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe.

“When it comes to serving items like beef and vegetables, we are returning to our roots,” said Lu Harlow, director of food and beverage for Xanterra’s Yellowstone National Park operations, which served 1.8 million guests last year. “Whenever possible and practical, we offer healthy foods that are good for our guests, our neighbors and our park. Because there are now more organic farms and local growers in the region, we have more choices to source close-to-the-ground and organic foods than ever before. It’s a win for our guests, a win for us and a win for our suppliers.”

The Healthy & Sustainable Food Program is a key pillar of the Healthy Parks, Healthy People US initiative, which the service established in 2011 to better link public health and the mission of public parks and public lands. The initiative includes national, state, and local parks, as well as business innovators, healthcare leaders, scientists, foundations and advocacy organizations.

Concessioners from the Muir Woods in California to the Statue of Liberty in New York have already received local and national restaurant awards for their efforts. In addition, the first National Park Service Healthy Parks, Healthy People Award nominations have been accepted and winners, including those in the healthy food category, will be announced in July.

The new Standards and Guidelines and other healthy and sustainable food resources are available on the NPS web site <http://concessions.nps.gov>.

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