# Opinion: The National Park Service’s importance



Half Dome is one of Yosemite’s iconic features. The California treasure became a national park in 1890. Photo/LTN file

Whether it’s the grandeur of Mother Nature, or history encapsulated in monuments and battlefields, or wildlife roaming free the National Park Service is there to remind us of our past and future.

It is easy to understand how the Park Service is about our past, especially when looking east toward the National Mall or south to battlefields or west to the USS Arizona.

Our future is reflected in the Park Service because how we treat these treasures says a lot about us as a citizenry. Do we sit by and let national treasures like the Ahwahnee Hotel and Curry Village in Yosemite National Park change names because of a poorly written contract or do we write our members of Congress to tell them we are disgusted by what is happening? Will our actions change the future even if they don’t alter the circumstances a couple hundred miles from here?

Do we say it’s OK for funding for the Park Service to continually be eroded or do we demand these treasures be preserved?

Do we support the Park Service by visiting some of the 409 areas it represents? Do we share memories to encourage others to visit these special places? Or perhaps we buy an annual pass even if we never visit a park.

This agency that turns 100 years old in August continues to evolve, grow and be part of all of our lives. The service is in every state, District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

It’s not just about the 59 national parks. The agency encompasses monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, seashores, recreation areas, scenic rivers and trails, and the White House.

Fourteen national parks existed before the Park Service came into being. Yellowstone in 1872 became the first national park — not just in the United States, but also in the world. Twenty-one monuments also existed prior to 1916. President Woodrow Wilson signed the act creating the National Park Service, which to this day is overseen by the Interior Department.

*Lake Tahoe News*, starting Jan. 25, is going to take readers on a trek to a few of these wonders. Writers are embracing locales that have touched them in memorable ways. The first story is from Carolyn Wright who has visited 33 of the national parks. Hers is as much a photo essay as it is a travelogue about some of those parks.

We hope through our series of monthly stories we connect you to places that perhaps you’ve never been to or we trigger fond memories.

Enjoy the journey.

*– Kathryn Reed, LTN publisher*