

Unpaid Protectors

**Volunteerism and the Diminishing Role of Federal Responsibility in the
National Park Service**

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Abstract

This thesis explores the foundations of the extraordinary growth and importance of volunteers in the National Park Service. Using a coproduction framework, it explains why the Volunteers-in-Parks program has grown to its current state. Additionally, it explains why coproduction has prevailed as the response to the Park Service's need for more resources. It is argued that a unique matrix of volunteer motivations creates a large supply of willing volunteers. Furthermore, the parks are shown to exist in a state of organizational poverty, which drives demand for unpaid workers. These supply and demand forces have fueled the growth of volunteerism. Finally, this thesis argues that theories of the hollow state and short-circuited democracy together explain why volunteerism has prevailed in the parks. It is concluded that hollow state volunteerism is inextricably tied to park health while short-circuited democracy volunteerism would subside if citizens became more aware of the important role volunteers play in the National Park Service.

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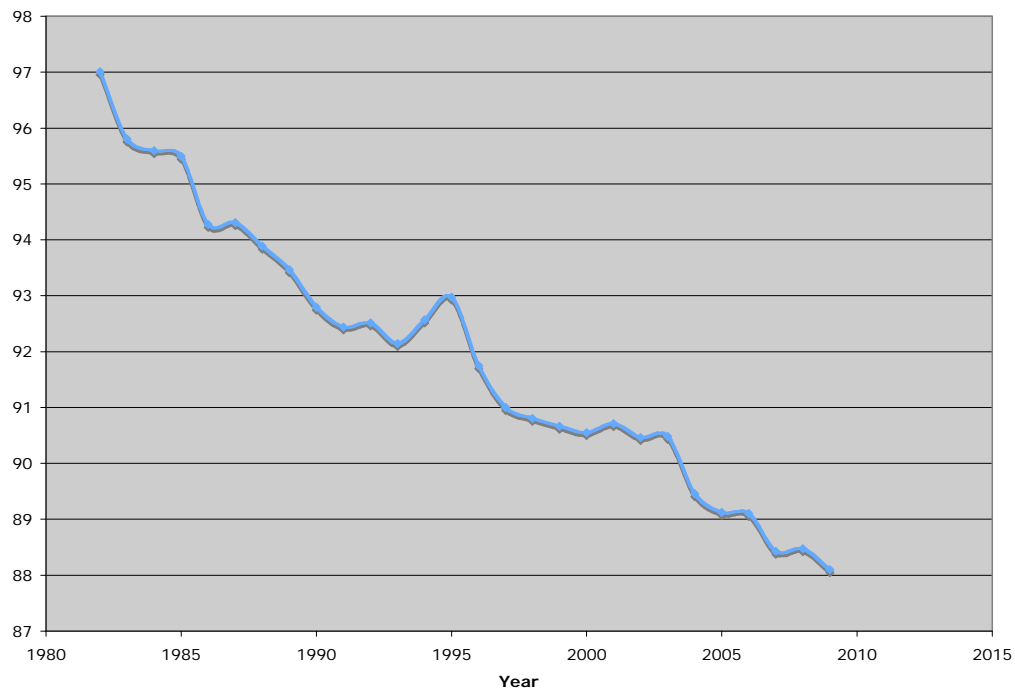
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Introduction

In 1916, with the establishment of the National Park Service, America vowed forever to collectively defend and care for its most treasured lands. Our federal government has been entrusted with the duty of keeping American landmarks such as Yellowstone and the Statue of Liberty unchanged for the enjoyment of future generations. This is a responsibility, however, that our government has begun to relinquish. Figure 1 shows the federal government's share of responsibility in providing national park services. Over the past three decades, the federal government's contribution to the overall manpower needed to operate the parks has steadily declined. This indicates the federal government no longer provides complete support for Park Service operations and its role is diminishing.

Figure 1. Percent share of federal responsibility in providing national park services, measured by total man-hours needed to operate the parks, 1982-2009.



Source: National Park Service Public Affairs Datasheet; Volunteers-in-Parks Program Datasheet

The Park Service is still considered to be at the core of our government's responsibility.

Americans care deeply about our national parks and the agency is among the most popular in the

federal government. With such steady reductions in federal commitment to the national parks, one would expect public outrage. However, any noteworthy backlash from U.S. citizens has been nonexistent; no pressure has been put on Congress to reverse the trend.

The U.S. government has been able to reduce its commitment to the national parks while avoiding any political repercussions because of volunteerism. The presence of volunteers has allowed the National Park Service to provide satisfactory levels of service without commensurate resources from the federal government. The result is extraordinary: a federal agency sustained in significant part by the donated time of unpaid workers.

This joint production of services is uncommon in the federal government and the National Park Service is recognized for its unique ability to accept volunteer work.¹ The U.S. Government states that it does not accept any type of donated time, except in rare circumstances, none of which apply to typical national park volunteer work.² To accept volunteers on a large scale would be to divest federal agencies from the shared ownership and collective support of all Americans.

¹ The US Forest Service, under the Department of Agriculture, also receives a sizeable volunteer population. Though in different departments of the federal government, both agencies deal in natural land management.

² “Generally speaking, Federal agencies are prohibited by law (section 1342 of title 31, United States Code) from accepting volunteer service. No person may provide unpaid service to the Government or provide service with the understanding that he or she will waive pay. Exceptions to this prohibition are provided only for: (1) employment in emergencies involving the protection of life or property; (2) employment of assistants to handicapped employees; (3) employment of experts and consultants; and (4) employment of students to further their educational goals.

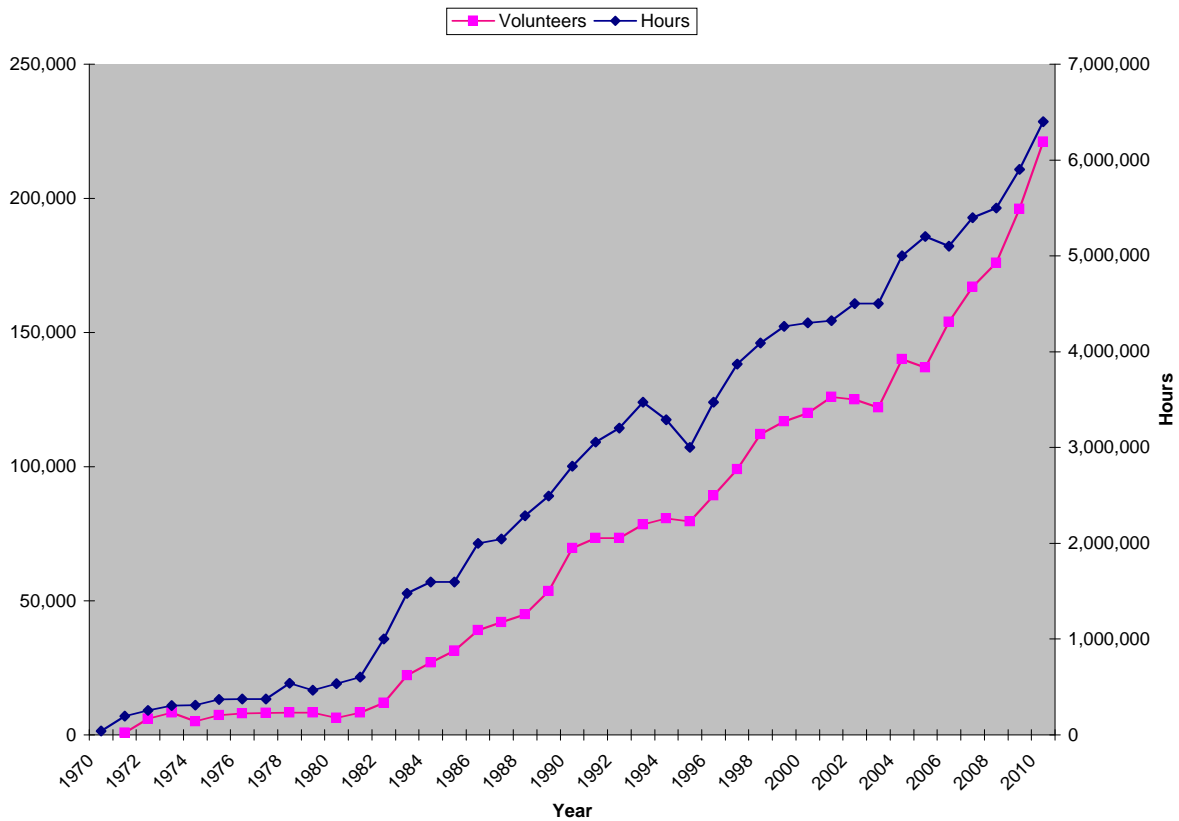
In addition, some Federal agencies, such as the National Park Service and the Forest Service, have specific authorities to accept unpaid services for specific jobs or functions. Individuals who are interested in volunteering their services to the Federal Government should contact the agency of most interest to inquire about specific opportunities” (Federal Employment Information Fact Sheets- Volunteer Service).

When legislation specifically allows for it, however, volunteers can be used in specific agencies.³ One of the only, and first, pieces of this legislation was passed in 1970 with the Volunteers-in-Parks Act, which gave the National Park Service the ability to officially accept the donated time of volunteers. The Act created the Volunteers-in-Parks (VIP) program, which accepts and manages volunteer work in the parks. The VIP program provides federal legal protection for participants, including assistance in the event of injury. Additionally, the VIP program allows funding for some volunteer reimbursements, accommodations and gestures of appreciation.

Today, over 200,000 individuals donate their time to the National Park Service annually. The presence of volunteers in varies by park, depending on things such as proximity to population centers and accommodation abilities. However, the general trends of volunteerism in the Park Service are very clear. Figure 2 presents the volume of volunteers in the Park Service and the hours they give through the VIP program annually. The figure shows that, with little exception, the contributions of volunteers to the national parks have increased every year since the start of the VIP program. These steady increases signify the popularity and importance volunteerism has in the National Park Service. Other indicators of volunteer contribution, such as their monetary value, would show the same trend.

³ “An officer or employee of the United States Government or of the District of Columbia government may not accept voluntary services for either government or employ personal services exceeding that authorized by law...” (U.S. Code, Section 1342, Title 31 taken from Federal Employment Information Fact Sheets- Volunteer Service).

Figure 2. Annual contribution of the VIP program in terms of individual volunteers and total hours donated, 1970-2010.



Source: Volunteers-in-Parks Program Datasheet

Between 2009 and 2010 alone, 25,000 additional volunteers joined the VIP Program, which is nearly the amount of the total full-time national park staff in the system.⁴ These volunteers have been integrated into almost every aspect of Park Service work and are universally understood to be essential to our parks in their modern condition.

The Volunteers-in-Parks Act, however, was not intended to become a major influence on Park Service operations; it was simply meant to alleviate the potential legal burdens on a few individuals who were assisting the Park Service as volunteers before 1970. The Park Service did not incorporate volunteers as a device to supplant paid staff or offset Congressional

⁴ For every Park Service employee, there are nearly 10 volunteers. In terms of hours worked, paid staff outnumber volunteers but the inputs are converging. This will be discussed later on. What is important at this point is to understand that volunteerism is a significant component to National Park work.

appropriations.⁵ Nonetheless, volunteerism in the national parks has continually increased in popularity and importance. So, while the government has not deliberately integrated volunteers to provision the national parks, precisely that has happened. This thesis is an explanation of the dynamics that have established and sustained volunteerism as an important role in the National Park Service.

First, why has volunteerism grown to its current state in the national parks? Second, why has volunteerism prevailed as the response to the National Park Service's need for more resources?

First, this thesis argues that basic supply and demand forces explain the rapid growth and current prevalence of volunteerism in the Park Service. The unique desirability of volunteer opportunities in the Park Service sustains a high population of willing volunteers. Meanwhile, the Park Service has historically experienced a chronic demand for more resources. This is because government funding is not sufficient to provide what is now expected of our national parks. These supply and demand forces combined to fuel the existence and growth of volunteerism in the national parks.

Second, this thesis develops two theories that explain why volunteerism has prevailed over other responses to the responsibility-resource gap in the National Park Service. Hollow state theory suggests that the federal government is incapable or unwilling to provide the services of the national parks without a supplementary volunteer effort. Short-circuited democracy theory, on the other hand, suggests that citizens have been shielded from information about the weakened state of the national parks and thus have not demanded change from their political representatives. Each theory implies a different relationship between the volunteerism and the

⁵ The Park Service is not allowed to use federal funding to advertise so that type of promotion for the VIP program would never exist.

National Park Service. Hollow state theory suggests that volunteers are a necessary component to the health of the National Park Service. Short-circuited democracy theory suggests that, if citizens were privy to complete information, they would demand that Congress increase Park Service funding and the role of volunteerism would subside.

Personal Experience

The motivation to explore this thesis came from my time working in Glacier National Park. For six weeks in the summer of 2011, I worked as an intern for the Crown of the Continent Learning Center (CCRLC), whose primary goal is to facilitate scientific research in the Park. The Center is staffed with only a few full-time staff members, aided by another couple of seasonal employees. Along with a varying number of summer interns, the Center accommodates outside researchers in addition to spearheading its own research projects.

One program at the CCRLC was the Citizen Science Program, with which I worked directly. The Program uses volunteers, called citizen scientists, to conduct a variety of research projects within the Park. Their major projects include the monitoring of pika, mountain goat, and loon populations. A seasonal staff member conducts a full-day training for interested volunteers before allowing them to venture into the Park themselves to conduct surveys. In the few short years the program has existed, hundreds of individuals have contributed observational data to the CCRLC, which has allowed the Center to make baseline estimates of animal populations within the Park. The Program is considered a success and the information the volunteers are providing the Park is incredibly important; it allows Glacier to assess the health of certain park species in addition to setting baseline population estimates for future studies. In sum, the work being done by volunteers in the Citizen Science Program is both important and needed because without them, some basic scientific data would not be collected at Glacier.

Early on in my experience at Glacier, I decided to volunteer my surplus time behind the desk in the visitor center because I wanted to be exposed to interpretative work in the parks. I called the front desk and, to my delight, the staff was enthusiastic and eager to have me behind the visitor center desk as soon as I was ready. The next morning I showed up in layman's clothes;

the only thing distinguishing me from a visitor was my volunteer cap. When I arrived, there were two interpretive rangers present, one paid and one volunteer. The paid staffer began to train me and I expected I would soak up the information and return another day to actually assist them. However, the visitor center was so busy that before I knew it, we had split up and I was addressing any questions I felt comfortable answering. I had not been in the visitor center a half hour before I had to manage my own line of visitors, assisting individuals nonstop for over an hour. I was thrilled to have so much responsibility but also nervous since my knowledge of Glacier was barely more than the visitors who were looking to me as an expert. I returned to the visitor center three more times before I left, dressed more appropriately and with more experience as my time in the park progressed. In the end, all staff members were appreciative of my time and remarked on how much it helped them handle tough hours behind the desk.

To manage the volunteers, including me, Glacier had a volunteer coordinator, a full-time employee position for 9 months of every year. In addition to other duties, the volunteer coordinator kept information on each VIP participant and applied for limited programming funds. Interestingly, Glacier hired the same number of volunteer coordinators as wildlife biologists: one. In a park with over a million acres of nearly intact habitat, home to hundreds of mammals and birds, Glacier still placed equal employment importance on their volunteer program. This is just one indicator of the relative importance volunteers hold at Glacier.

The conclusion I drew from my experience both in the CCRLC and the visitor center was that volunteers are absolutely and undeniably essential to the current function of Glacier National Park. Basic population estimates of some of Glacier's most important species relied almost entirely on a combination of visiting and seasonal volunteers. While the visitor center always had at least one paid staff member on duty at all times, lines of visitors would easily become

overwhelming without the nearly constant presence of a complementary volunteer force. Volunteers could be found everywhere. The work volunteers did was core to the Park Service mission and in their absence, certain services simply would not have been provided. This encouraged me to discover whether Glacier's relationship with volunteers was the same as in other parks. If so, I wondered how the parks had arrived at a place where their success was at least somewhat reliant on individuals who volunteered their time.

Thus began the research for this thesis. I found that most parks experienced these same dynamics. Even clearer was that the Park Service as a whole was increasingly relying on the work provided by volunteers. While volunteers are, by law, not allowed to perform the same work as employees, these distinctions in the parks themselves are merely technical. Many employees state that volunteers allow the Park Service to provide a margin of excellence. However, you will be hard pressed to find someone that feels current park services are extraneous; on the contrary, most feel the Park Service could do more. So why are we, the American people, not paying for our parks? Why have we come to entrust our parks to the unpaid protectors? It is my hope that this thesis will provide some of the answers.

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank the volunteers and employees of the National Park Service for their hard work and dedication. Without their commitment, the national parks would not be what they are today. I thank all those interviewed for their invaluable contributions to this thesis. I also express my gratitude to all the individuals who steered me in the right direction and helped me access difficult data. I thank my thesis adviser, Professor Friesema, for his expertise and guidance. I would also like to thank our seminar advisor, Professor Winters, for his advice and mentorship. I thank my family and friends for their never-ending support and advice in both school and life. Finally, I thank my parents and brother for introducing me to the national parks and sharing many of my best memories in our country's wild places.

Chapter 1

Methodology and Literature Review

1. Methodology

The analysis presented in much of this thesis is a synthesis of literature from peer-reviewed journals and published books. It draws heavily upon existing literature in the fields of coproduction, volunteer motivation, hollow state and democratic inefficiency theory. Some primary resources used have been collected from federal archives. Budgeting information, Congressional documents and data including number of units, acreage and visitation have been obtained from online resources or by contacting public affairs officials within the Park Service. Additionally, information has been gathered from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that specialize in national park issues. These NGOs include the National Parks Conservation Association, the Association for National Park Rangers and the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees.

In order to cohesively present the current state of the parks, I also interviewed authoritative sources on the National Park Service. Experts in Park Service issues constitute the first group interviewed; this includes retired employees from high-ranking positions within the Service and individuals who have extensively researched the system. A full list of qualifications is provided in the List of Interviews.

The second group of interviews is individual superintendents, which act as managers within their respective units. Superintendents have a high degree of authority over the distribution of funding and the structure of services in their parks. Their experience can provide insight into the nature of volunteerism in the national parks. Six superintendents have been

interviewed. I have attempted to randomly pick interviewees evenly distributed across the parks⁶ to represent a fair sampling. While we cannot definitely claim their views are representative of all Park Service superintendents, it is reasonable that they are indicative of common sentiments throughout the system.

To provide a direct perspective on volunteer motivations within the parks, three current Volunteers-in-Parks participants have been interviewed. Volunteers were asked to recount the reasons they decided to volunteer for the Park Service and a background of the events that led to their first volunteer experience. In keeping with methodology provided by Shye (2010), volunteers were not presented with a previously created matrix of motivations. Rather, questioning was left open to in order to prevent the interviewer from infusing bias into the answers of volunteers.

Finally, two volunteer coordinators and a chief of interpretation were interviewed. In direct contact with volunteers, they can offer a unique perspective on the function of the Volunteers-in-Parks program.

Information from these conversations is presented throughout the thesis but interview data is most strongly used in the application of the hollow state and short-circuited democracy theories in chapter 5. A complete list of those interviewed is produced at the end of the thesis. Current employees and volunteers are presented anonymously to protect them as human subjects.

2. Literature Review

In order to begin this thesis, we must define the concept of coproduction. In general terms, coproduction explains that “most public services have the characteristic of being provided through a process in which the *combined* efforts of consumers and service personnel determine

⁶ Ordered with respect to visitation

the quality and quantity of services actually available” (Rich 1981: 60). Citizen action always has a degree of effect on the volume of public services required. For example, if an individual decides to stop littering on the highway, fewer resources will be devoted to highway maintenance. Alternatively, if families do not practice effective fire prevention, it will increase the demand for firefighting services. Volunteering is one way in which citizens can affect the production of public services. Rich (1981) categorizes “volunteering in a social service agency” as positive individual coproductive action that improves public services (61-62). This assertion describes an instantaneous improvement in services but it does not address how volunteers can modify the function of public agencies.

Ferris (1984) furthers the study of coproduction by introducing a new concept, coprovision, in which the actions of volunteers alter the financing of public services. In his assessment, Ferris claims that coprovision either “reduces the amount of resources that the public sector must commit to maintaining a given service level or increases the service level that can be obtained with a given amount of public sector resources” (Ferris 1984: 325). Within this framework, “citizens’ charitable time and money donations to the public sector are equivalent” (Ferris 1984: 326). This implies that the input of volunteer work funds public services to a degree. When volunteers contribute their time, it means the government’s share of provision is reduced. This fundamentally alters the nature of a federal agency because the responsibility for providing a public good is theoretically shared among entire citizenry through federal taxes. This phenomenon is termed coproduction and provides the theoretical approach to this thesis. The conclusion drawn is that the relative role of the federal government in providing the services of the National Park Service has become diminished by the use of volunteers in coproduction.

There has been some work devoted to the advantages and disadvantages of involving volunteers in the provision of public services (Brudney 1993; Brudney and Duncombe 1992). This thesis does not attempt to determine whether or not volunteers are good for the Park Service. Rather, it attempts to understand why it has become so important to the system. Using the information presented here, a valuation of volunteerism in the national parks could be a subject for future research.

In the National Park Service, the conditions that created coproduction have never been studied. However, general theories as to why volunteers are integrated into public services will be used as a framework to answer this question. Ferris (1988) posits that a simple supply and demand model may be used to explain the reliance of government on volunteer work. There must be a demand on the part of public managers to enlist and involve volunteers in the production of public services. However, a demand for volunteers is not sufficient. There must be a willingness on the part of citizens to donate their time to the production of public services in order for a pool of volunteers to exist (Ferris 1988: 5). This exists in the National Park Service, typified by one superintendent's claim that, "it's a two pronged issue. One issue is that you are not funded at the operational level that you would like to be funded. The second piece is that you have all of these stewardship projects that people *want* to participate in. People *want* to volunteer" (Superintendent F). Consequently, this thesis will explain the integration of volunteerism in the national parks by examining the supply of and demand for volunteers within the national park system. Chapters 3 and 4 will be devoted to these analyses, respectively.

While coproduction literature explains the conditions that make coproduction likely, it has yet to explain why the integration of volunteers outcompetes other management responses. As Ferris (1984) stresses, volunteers allow the government to either maintain current services with

fewer resources or increase services with stagnant resources. If a public good is inadequate, the federal government has direct ways of remedying the problem. It can either allocate more resources and maintain services, or maintain resources and cut back services. Why does coproduction prevail as a response instead? This question is not answered in existing literature. In chapter 5, this thesis establishes the hollow state and short-circuited democracy theories to provide an answer to why coproduction has become the selected management strategy for the national parks. These theories could be applicable to other cases of coproduction and may be useful in future research on volunteers in public service.

There is some evidence of how volunteers are a critical component to the modern national park management (NPCA Report; ANPR Report; Sharpe et al. 1983; Wade 2005). For the most part, these accounts address how volunteers fill in gaps in the Park Service. In a GAO study conducted in the National Park Service from 2001-2005, it was found that volunteers are being used to coproduce federal services. Their study claims, “park officials [...] reported that they increasingly relied on volunteers and other authorized funding sources to provide operations and services that were previously paid with allocations for daily operations from the ONPS⁷ account” (GAO 2006: 12). While the dependence on volunteers is stated, the reason national parks have come to rely on them is not discussed. Critical accounts of volunteerism in the national parks are lacking and the importance of the Volunteers-in-Parks program is easily understated. Indeed, in one editor’s compilation of over 70 of the most critical historic national park documents, the Volunteers-in-Parks Act does not even appear (Dilsaver 1994). The need for rigorous academic analysis of volunteerism in the national parks is evident.

⁷ Operations budget of the National Park Service

Volunteerism has never been rigorously studied in the National Park Service. This thesis will apply existing research on supply and demand coproduction factors to the National Park Service for the first time. Furthermore, it will fill in some of the gaps in existing coproduction literature. This thesis will establish two theories that explain why coproduction prevails over other management responses in the National Park Service. These theories may be applied in future coproduction research. In this way, both the fields of national park volunteerism and coproduction will be furthered from the research presented in this thesis.

Chapter 2

History

This chapter provides a brief history of the National Park Service and Volunteers-in-Parks Act. Their origins are critical to understanding the importance of volunteers in the national parks today. Furthermore, because volunteerism is unusual in federal agencies, a history of the VIP Act will contextualize the unlikely existence of the Volunteers-in-Parks program. Especially for readers unfamiliar with our national parks and the VIP Act, this chapter will establish the foundational knowledge necessary for this thesis.

1. The National Park Service

America's best idea, our Nation's crown jewels, and the purest example of U.S. democracy are all common terms for our country's national parks (Dilsaver 1994; National Parks: America's Best Idea; Ridenour 1994). The first national park, Yellowstone, set aside by Congress in 1872 to be preserved for the enjoyment and benefit of the American people, was the first act of national land preservation in the world. The system of parks that followed became an exemplar of American ingenuity and freedom (Sellars 1997: 7). Today, almost every nation in the world possesses a "national park" and the framework through which countries preserve nature has been modeled after the United States National Park Service (Lewis 2010). The Park Service cares for some of our most treasured landscapes, cultural icons and historic sites. From large tracts of the Rocky Mountains to the Statue of Liberty to Civil War battlefields, the National Park Service maintains an image of American exceptionalism. Hosting millions of international visitors each year, the national parks also inform global impressions of the United States. In short, national parks have become a centerpiece of our national identity.

In 1916, the National Park Service Act⁸ created the National Park Service agency and the United States solidly defined its responsibility to protect the scattered areas across the country it had set aside as parks. Nearly half a century had elapsed since the creation of Yellowstone and dozens of sites, mostly noteworthy for their natural beauty, had been taken under federal management. Debates surrounding the National Park Service Act's passage reveal deep concerns about adding a new agency to the federal government (Sellars 1997: 37). However, in the end, the Park Service was created and a clear, yet broad, statement of purpose was established:

To conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations (Sellars 1997: 38).

The federal government had decided that, despite concerns of increasing the scope of government, a strong, centralized Park Service was important to the Nation's fabric.

With this broad and, at times, conflicting⁹ mission, the national parks have evolved substantially over the past century in the way they fulfill their mission. Hundreds of park units have been added to the system and the criteria to be considered for Park Service status has been expanded.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the role those parks play in society has also developed. Currently, the national parks provide a variety of services. Enforcement rangers provide physical protection for the land, ecosystems and people within its borders. Interpretive rangers inform individuals about park resources and provide environmental education for the public. The Park Service also

⁸ Also referred to as the Organic Act of 1916

⁹ The National Park mission calls for the Service to protect natural ecosystems in perpetuity while providing for the benefit and recreation for visitors. This can be understood in many instances as antithetical when human recreation compromises ecosystem health.

¹⁰ Current designations of National Park Service units: national park, national monument, national preserve, national historic site, national historical park, national memorial, national battlefield, national cemetery, national recreation area, national seashore, national lakeshore, national river, national parkway, national trail, and affiliated areas.

engages in resource management and conducts scientific research. With administrators supporting these activities, the national parks themselves constitute a complex ecosystem of duties and services. Meanwhile, each aspect of national park work upholds its mission to connect citizens to their protected lands and ensure that parks will remain intact for future generations.

2. Volunteers-in-Parks Act

One substantial alteration to the National Park Service came with the passage of the Volunteers-in-Parks Act. Prior to the Act, there was minimal volunteer activity in national parks, mainly due to the excess burdens volunteers had to take upon themselves. In the congressional hearings leading up to the passage of the Act, George Hartzog, then director of the National Park Service, detailed these restrictions and expressed a desire to alleviate the burden.

We have in the past occasionally accepted services of private citizens on a non-appointed basis but persons donating their services have been required to waive liability of the United States for injury sustained during performance of volunteers services and to agree that they were not employees of the United States and therefore personally liable to others for injuries caused by their volunteer activities. The onus of having to waive these rights has been such as to practically nullify the gratuitous services programs... It is a burden which individuals cannot accept and it is one that we think should be removed in order to encourage our citizens to participate more actively in these programs (Congressional Hearing: 6).

Only two men, Director Hartzog and Jerry Kane,¹¹ testified before Congress, and there was very little opposition raised to the proposal. Director Hartzog preemptively addressed some fears by admitting in his opening statement that union representatives had only expressed hesitation that the program might be used to recruit replacements for staff. Hartzog assured the committee that the volunteer program would not be used as such and drew attention to the fact that the American Federation of Government Employees issued a statement calling the Act a “golden opportunity” (Congressional Hearing: 6). Hartzog’s assurances, along with a specific order that, “the

¹¹ Kane’s qualification for speaking was that he had founded a summer program that facilitated volunteer opportunities for youth.

Secretary shall not permit the use of volunteers to displace any employee” (VIP Act, 18g), encouraged lawmakers to pass the bill through Congress.

The ease with which the Act passed through Congress indicates no one understood how massive the volunteer program would become forty years later. Since the passage of the Volunteers-in-Parks Act, volunteerism has grown exponentially and shows no signs of slowing down. The Park Service now hires volunteer coordinators, which oversee the acquisition, management and evaluation of volunteers. National parks can also provide stipends and housing in addition to taking efforts to exhibit volunteer appreciation. Volunteer time is an important resource for many parks and to most aspects of park operations. Volunteers have become an integral component of the National Park Service and now hold a significant role in protecting our nation’s public lands.

Chapter 3

Volunteering in the Parks as Unique- Supply

In order to understand why coproduction has emerged in the National Park Service, we must first account for the large population of volunteers that donate their time each year. These individuals constitute the supply factor necessary for coproduction to become possible. As Ferris (1988) draws forth in his work, the presence of supply relies on willing volunteers so the potential pool of volunteers the government is capable of recruiting is primarily dependent on the desire individuals have to donate their time. Given this, why has the National Park Service amassed over 200,000 volunteers annually? What drives volunteers to donate their time to the national parks?

Ferris (1988) claims that volunteerism in the public sector is essentially a response to the inadequate production of governmental services. He also expects volunteerism to be strongest where community cohesion is greatest. While Ferris' conditions certainly could apply to the Park Service,¹² it is not sufficient to explain the prevalence of volunteerism in the national parks, in part because it makes no mention of the benefits of volunteering. In Clary et al. (1996), the authors present a list of volunteer areas. They show that individuals engage in volunteer work for separate reasons, depending on the area in which they participate. In their analysis, they claim that public benefit and environmental volunteering motivations are distinct. However, national park volunteerism could be produced by an intersection of both. Individuals interested

¹² Some volunteers feel they are helping fill in services left open by the government. One volunteer comments, "the volunteers really provide an important service to the parks and do fill in the gaps because a lack of funding" (Volunteer B). Community cohesion could be a factor in volunteer work in the Park Service. Many volunteers work heavily with visitors in the visitor centers, leading hikes or just answering questions on the trail. Their work can be influential to the patrons of the parks and strive to instill visitors with the love they have fostered for our Nation's protected lands. "We feel like we are promoting the National Parks to the visitors because we know the future of the National Parks, which we love so much, are the visitors that come in and the kids that they bring with them" (Volunteer B).

in one or both of the areas would find their motivations fulfilled by work with the Park Service. Thus, none of these literatures can explain national park volunteerism by themselves. The motivations that drive the supply of volunteers in the Park Service must be given specialized attention.

This chapter will argue that there is a unique matrix of forces driving the supply of volunteers in the National Park Service. The complex and varied set of volunteer motivations, rooted in both altruism and egoism, make unpaid work with the Park Service highly desirable. Altruistic motivations account for the reasons people become involved in environmental and public service volunteerism. Egoistic motivations encompass the benefits that individuals derive from volunteer work in the form of self-promotion and self-fulfillment. Finally, the rise of volunteerism in the Park Service coincides with a trend of volunteer behavior in the more general environmental movement. These factors together explain the extraordinary supply of volunteers necessary for coproduction in the national parks.

1. Defining Volunteerism

Volunteerism, as defined by Wilson (2000), “is any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or cause” (215). Existing literature still debates if compensation and purpose should determine whether an individual is considered a volunteer. Cnaan et al. (1995) review multiple definitions of volunteerism and conclude that volunteerism can be understood on a continuum, from pure to broad. According to the article, a broad definition of volunteerism can include individuals who are partially compensated, donate time for selfish reasons or are coerced to a degree. For this thesis, it is important to adopt this broad view of volunteerism because the Volunteer-in-Parks (VIP) program counts volunteers who fall into all three of those categories.

First, some volunteers may use the Volunteer-in-Parks program to fulfill community service hours mandated by courts so, in this sense, there is a degree of coercion that can be present in volunteerism in the parks. Volunteer Coordinator B described an individual who was court mandated to do volunteer work in her park because he committed civil disobedience in another national park. Secondly, though it varies greatly among different parks, it can be common for volunteers to receive basic remuneration including reimbursement, stipends and even complimentary housing; they still remain classified as Volunteers-in-Parks program participants.¹³ Even when the Park Service expends these resources for volunteers, it still implies a significant cost savings to the federal government. Finally, no volunteers should be excluded based upon their motivations to donate time. Regardless of whether altruism or egoism causes a volunteer to contribute, their work is still a significant contribution to the Park Service. Many volunteers join the Park Service because they understand the personal benefits they can gain from the experience and this does not alter the work they provide the government. In fact, it is conceivable that any volunteer work could be a combination of altruistic and selfish behavior. Thus, if a person contributes to a park for a selfish reason, their work should not be approached as any less worthy or valuable. For these reasons, this thesis adopts the broad definition of volunteerism put forth by Cnaan et al. (1995).

2. Altruistic and Egoistic Volunteering

Wilson (2000) examines two perspectives on volunteering. The sociological approach treats volunteerism as an expression of values, beliefs and motives. The behavioral approach, on the other hand, assumes that volunteers weigh the costs and benefits of volunteerism, making a rational decision based on the profitability of donating their time. Shye (2010) explains

¹³ It must be noted that volunteerism is not free to parks. The Park Service must expend resources to maintain effective volunteer programs.

volunteerism similarly, establishing the dichotomy between altruistic and egoistic reasons for donating time. This chapter will use Shye's (2010) terminology infused with the concepts of Wilson (2000). Volunteerism in the national parks is presented here as altruistic and egoistic. Altruistic motivations encompass the values, beliefs and motives of individuals that are engaged in environmental and public service volunteerism. Egoistic motivations address the dimension of volunteerism in which individuals derive personal benefit from their involvement in volunteer work. Together, they constitute the motivations that drive the supply side of coproduction in the national parks.

2.1. Altruistic

Volunteerism can be understood as the result of a certain set of ethics and responsibilities. Individuals are often influenced by the values that surround them and ultimately formulate their own conceptions of societal duty (Wilson 2000). Volunteers have been shown to share a set of values that do not exist in nonvolunteering populations (Clary et al. 1996). While there is literature on the general values that volunteers share (Flanagan et al 1999: 149), it is more useful to examine the values that guide national park volunteerism specifically. Because the Park Service provides the unique opportunity for individuals to protect the environment and also serve the nation, values from the two distinct fields of environmentalism and public service must be examined.

2.1.1. Environmental

There has been some research on the significant factors that inspire individuals to engage in environmental volunteering (Ryan et al. 2001; Measham and Barnett 2008). Such work has taken general motivations for volunteerism and reconfigured them to account for the qualities of environmentalism. Measham and Barnett (2008) present the motivations for environmental

volunteer work as six key factors.¹⁴ All are likely present in national park volunteerism because our nation's parks have become an emblem for United States environmental preservation. However, a few of Measham and Barnett's factors deserve special attention with respect to the National Park Service. They are detailed here.

National parks pursue a great variety of work, including education, construction, law enforcement and scientific research. Volunteers genuinely interested in environmental issues and the government's role in their protection can be seen to value the first factor, *learning about the environment*. One volunteer stated, "we've learned so much from the rangers here about geology and history and so forth" (Volunteer B). Being immersed in a single park's environment for an extended period of time affords volunteers the opportunity to become knowledgeable about the natural history of that place. In the national parks, this factor should be expanded to encapsulate learning about how our country actually protects nature. One volunteer states, "one of the things I wanted to get out of volunteering was learning about the national park system, what they did, how they did it, what a ranger does, what kind of background he needs to do his job correctly and [it is] just basically a learning process" (Volunteer A). In this way, volunteering allows individuals to become more intimately acquainted with natural places in the United States and the ways in which we, as a country, protect them.

Measham and Barnett's (2008) fifth factor, *general ethic of care for the environment*, is another motivator in national park volunteerism. In a survey of environmental steward volunteers, the authors found many participants had a basic desire to help the environment. Particularly important was the need to save environments that were vulnerable in order to protect areas for future generations, which is often referred to as a bequeathing value (Grese et al. 2000).

¹⁴ These factors are: contributing to community, social interaction, personal development, learning about the environment, a general ethic of care for the environment, and an attachment to a particular place.

National parks have become our proudest contribution to the world of nature preservation and individuals with an environmental ethic would be naturally drawn to the work of the national parks.

Because national parks are protected indefinitely, Measham and Barnett's (2008) sixth factor, *attachment to a particular place*, should be particularly important to volunteers in the Park Service. The authors draw this factor from a study done by Gooch (2003) in which environmental volunteers were interviewed to examine why they donated their time. Over half interviewed claimed their primary impetus to volunteer was their attachment to the local area. Additional support for this factor comes from the concept of environmental epiphanies, which are moments defined as "an experience in which one's perception of the essential meaning of their relationship to nature shifts in a meaningful manner" (Merrick 2008). These experiences can shape people's lives and lead them to develop a greater commitment to environmental work. Often times these experiences occur in a natural place and national parks, being some of the most intact landscapes in our country, provide the spaces in which people can experience environmental epiphanies. In Merrick's dissertation, of the 34 people interviewed, 5 had their first epiphanies in national parks. One individual mentions returning time and time again because she felt an important connection to that place. It is reasonable to assume that some individuals would feel compelled to revisit and spend time in the places they originally experienced the epiphany. This desire could lead to the decision to volunteer in a national park.

The ability to foster place these-based connections in the national parks is plentiful because they are publicly maintained, cheap and accessible to all US citizens (NPS Website).¹⁵

¹⁵ An Annual Pass to the National Park Service costs \$80 and allows a car with up to 4 people unlimited access to any park or federal recreation area for an entire year. Citizens over 62 years old can acquire unlimited access for a lifetime for only \$10 and use it to admit a full car to any park or federal recreation area (http://www.nps.gov/fees_passes.htm).

In much of the rest of the world, especially before America ushered in the idea of national parks, the most spectacular natural wonders were bought up and hoarded by the wealthy aristocracy (Lewis 2009). In the United States, however, people are encouraged to experience their wild lands and thus, more individuals are afforded the opportunity to become engaged and excited by nature preservation (The National Parks: America's Best Idea). The result is volunteers who donate time because they have fostered personal connections with our national parks.

2.1.2. Public Service

Serving the parks is serving the nation and public service is inextricably tied to volunteer work in the national parks. The values of public service must be incorporated into the altruistic dimension of volunteer motivations. "In its broadest sense, 'public service' is a concept, an attitude, a sense of duty-yes, even a sense of public morality. These attributes are basic to democratic society-attributes lacking or of low priority in an authoritarian society" (Staats 1988: 601). In this quote, former Comptroller General of the United States Elmer Staats identifies the basic altruistic foundations of public service volunteerism. These values are explored in the work of Perry and Wise (1990) in which they identify norm-based and affective motivation factors.

Norm-based motivations for public service are present in individuals who align themselves within social norms. Essentially, norm-based motivations grow out of societal institutions and concepts of civic participation. Perry and Wise (1990) present three norm-based volunteer motivations for public service. First is *desire to serve the public interest*, which is understood to be a selfless act for the good of the community. From servicemen and women to tireless public servants, the United States extols its citizens that exhibit this quality. The second

motive is *loyalty to duty and to the government as a whole*. An undying support and love for country has defined America and its citizens (Viroli 1995: 182). Finally, Perry and Wise (1990) claim that citizens donate surplus time to the government because they want to maintain a level of *social equity*. Because norm-based motivations represent a commitment to the institutions of the U.S. government, national parks are one outlet for individuals to express their desire to serve the public. Thus, all three of the norm-based public service motivations influence the matrix of national park volunteerism.

Affective motives address the emotional foundations for volunteering in public services (Perry and Wise 1990). The first factor, *conviction about its social importance*, is integral to national park volunteering. Many individuals who donate their time to parks believe immensely in the mission of the national parks and want to carry that on to others. When discussing the importance of her work to preserving national parks in the future, Volunteer B stated, “kids are going to remember their experience here when they’re an adult and if the national parks don’t get that kind of support, who knows what’s going to happen” (Volunteer B). Another motive, termed the *patriotism of benevolence*, claims individuals sacrifice their time out of a general for others in their political community. The work volunteers provide is a direct tax input into the national park system. In essence, volunteers are sacrificing their own financial and opportunity resources to alleviate the tax burden on their fellow citizens. Thus, Perry and Wise’s (1990) affective motives are also present in the national park volunteer matrix.

2.2. Egoistic

The counterpart to altruistic volunteerism is egoistic volunteerism. Volunteering for personal benefit does not affect the value of donated time and is an important dimension to the examination of volunteer motivations. To fully understand the supply of volunteers in the Park

Service, it is necessary to examine the personal gains individuals receive when they volunteer. These benefits can be grouped into the categories self-promotion and self-fulfillment.

2.2.1. Promotion of Self

The promotion of oneself is an important factor that influences individuals to volunteer. Perry and Wise (1990) suggest there is a self-interested dimension to public service volunteerism, termed “rational motives”. These motives further the individual rather than the institution they are volunteering for. The only rational motive applicable to the national parks is *advocacy for a special interest*.¹⁶ Often put in places of high visitor contact, volunteers can have a significant influence on how the parks are received by the public. If an individual thinks their fellow citizens ought to have a more comprehensive knowledge of plant and animal biology, they could work in a visitor center and stress the natural history of the area. In this way, they gain satisfaction from furthering a cause that holds importance to them. The national parks provide an outlet through which their beliefs can be expressed and ideas can be disseminated.

Volunteering can also provide tangible benefits to an individual hoping for a job in the future. In a study done by Day and Devlin (1998), it was found that those who volunteered received a 6-7 percent increase in annual salary. The authors put forth three theories as to why volunteers fare better in the job market. First, volunteerism is an investment in human capital and makes individuals more attractive to potential employers. Second, volunteerism indicates an individual has a higher work ethic.¹⁷ Finally, volunteering exposes individuals to a broader network of professional contacts.

¹⁶ Other rational motives focus on the ability for volunteers to influence public policy. Volunteers in the Park Service do not have any direct personal influence on public policy so that factor has been omitted from the national park volunteer matrix.

¹⁷ The second factor can be largely ignored because it would not explain why a volunteer would be specifically interested in National Park volunteer work. It has also been accounted for in the earlier discussion of innate value differences between volunteers and nonvolunteers.

From Day and Devlin's study, we can extrapolate the rest of the self-promotion motivations. *Investment in human capital* is the egoistic counterpart to altruistic *learning* discussed earlier. The variety of work that national parks pursue offers individuals the opportunity to gain a multitude of specialized skills. Volunteerism allows people to enter a new field of work without necessarily possessing the skills to obtain a paid position. One current national park employee described her first experiences with the national parks as a volunteer. It helped her acquire skills she had wanted to develop in herself. "I had this goal of wanting to do public speaking... so I took on an internship... where I forced myself to give three tours a day to 75-100 people and I had an excellent mentor and really good support" (Chief of Interpretation A). She states her intent was to "get the skills so that [she] could become a paid staff" (Chief of Interpretation A). Chief of Interpretation A's experience is representative of many other current employees and volunteering is a practical way to become a paid staff member in the future. For those that aspire to join the ranks of national park employees, volunteering for the parks themselves can be the most effective way of gaining the skills necessary to become hired.

Paid positions in the national parks are coveted; it is not uncommon for individual park employment websites, especially the well-known units, to mention the difficulty of acquiring a full time position (NPS Website¹⁸). Acquiring a recommendation from a park supervisor or possessing a personal connection to your potential employer would increase an individual's odds of obtaining these competitive positions. Thus *exposure to a broader network of professional contacts* must also be important to volunteers seeking future employment in the Park Service.

¹⁸ "Many people desire permanent or term jobs with the National Park Service, which can be highly competitive" appears on the employment pages for Yosemite (<http://www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/npsjobs.htm>) and North Cascades (<http://www.nps.gov/noca/parkmgmt/jobs.htm>) National Parks. "We have very little turnover in our permanent staff, so you may want to consider temporary or seasonal employment with us" appears on Glacier National Park's employment page (<http://www.nps.gov/glac/parkmgmt/jobs.htm>).

Getting hired after volunteering might be thought of as closer to a promotion than getting hired into a new field. This implies significant benefit to a national park volunteer.

The increased employability motivations only apply to those looking for future work with the parks or other employers. Some Volunteers-in-Parks participants, such as retired individuals or those content with their current careers, do not receive these benefits. Nevertheless, future employment benefits are important and appear in the national park volunteerism matrix.

2.2.2. Self-Fulfillment

Working in national parks can be a fun and rewarding experience. It has been found that environmental volunteering is a reciprocal experience, giving substantial benefits back to the individual (Ryan et al. 2001). While donating time to a hospital might entail cleaning bedpans and tending to the sick, national park volunteer work implies the benefits of being outdoors, socializing with others and privileged access to some of America's most iconic landscapes. Because of this, self-fulfillment benefits influence the supply of national park volunteers and must be factored into the volunteerism matrix.

Volunteering in general has been shown to improve happiness and mental health (Musick and Wilson 2003). Environmental volunteering has the added benefit of exposing individuals to the natural areas and provides the *benefits of being outdoors*. In 2004, an Outdoor Industry Foundation survey found that 80% of respondents felt outdoor recreation activities “reduce stress, promote feelings of accomplishment and make them feel younger.” Nearly the same number of respondents stated it improved their personal relationships with others (Outdoor Industry Foundation Study 2004).

There has also been research on the value of outdoor recreation because it provides an enjoyable way for individuals to increase fitness. Referred to as “pleasurable leisure

experiences,” hiking, biking and camping are found to be highly effective ways of increasing general health (Norton and Suk 2004). Furthermore, environmental volunteers have been shown to be 2.6 times more likely to meet physical activity recommendations than non-volunteers and volunteers who did not work on environmental projects (Librett et al. 2005). The types of environmental volunteering opportunities highlighted, such as “maintaining trails, planting trees, eradicating invasive plants and cleaning up parks” (Librett et al. 2005: 11), are central duties of many Volunteers-in-Parks positions. The literature makes specific mention of our national parks as America’s primary outdoor recreation outlet (Norton and Suk 2004; Librett et al. 2005). Thus, participation in the VIP program exposes the individual to all the mental and physical health benefits that come with recreating and volunteering in the outdoors.

There are important social dimensions to volunteerism as well. Surveys of volunteer stewards have revealed that the opportunity to find others who share similar beliefs is an important aspect to volunteering in an environmental context (Grese et al. 2000). National park work is often social, especially in visitor services. Furthermore, if an individual chooses to volunteer for a national park, it is likely they will find others who share similar interests. Thus, volunteering in the national parks invites the benefits of *social networking*.

The final self-fulfillment benefit is the *privileged access to the national parks* that individuals gain when they donate their time. Because Volunteers-in-Parks programs differ slightly between individual parks, the benefits may vary across the Park Service. However, volunteers are often given free entry into the park and, if space and resources allow, complimentary housing in the park. Volunteers living within the park boundaries, including campground hosts, spend their seasons on some of the most valuable real estate in the country. Spending an extended period of time in these popular tourist destinations provides immeasurable

benefit to a volunteer. “It has been our dream to live in a national park... because all of them are so beautiful and one means of doing that is volunteering, just living our dream of living in a national park” (Volunteer B). This quote emphasizes the privileged access volunteers gain over an average visitor. Standard across all parks is the Volunteer Pass; if an individual accrues 500 volunteer hours, they gain free admission to any park or federal recreation area for a year (NPS Website¹⁹). Thus, the privileged access that volunteers gain can lead to a multitude of material benefits.

2.3. Confluence of Motivations

Figure 3 provides a graphical summary of the set of volunteer motivations for the National Park Service. It clearly presents the new matrix of motivations developed in this chapter. Just as the national park institution is unique, the set of motivations for its volunteers must also be distinct. This new matrix explains the extraordinary supply of volunteers in the Park Service.

The motivations of national park volunteers may be best encapsulated in the words of a volunteer pamphlet released by the Park Service.

As a VIP you will represent the National Park Service, work in unique settings, preserve this country’s natural and cultural legacy, and help visitors discover the resources, meanings, and values found in your national parks.

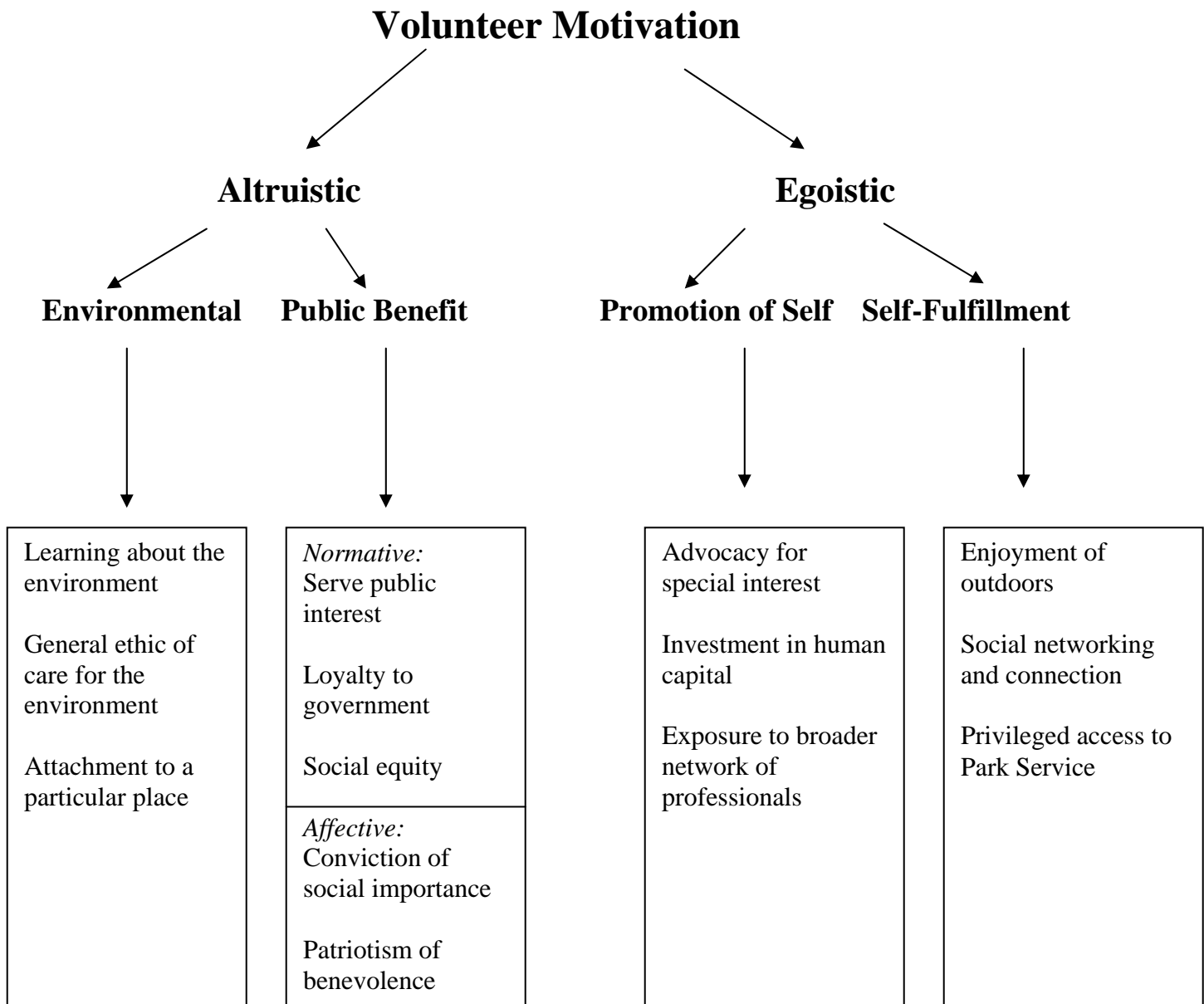
Volunteer time can be counted as work experience for future jobs, but does not count towards Federal Civil Service time if you should later become a Federal employee (VIP Brochure).

All at once, this statement touches on the benefits of protecting the environment, serving

¹⁹ Specifically, http://www.nps.gov/fees_passes.htm.

the federal government and seeking personal growth and development. The confluence of these motivations constitutes a matrix unique to the national parks. This drives the supply side of coproduction in the National Park Service.

Figure 3. Graphical representation of the new matrix of volunteer motivations developed for National Park Service volunteerism.



3. General Trends in Environmentalism

The growth of volunteerism in the national parks should also be put in the context of the modern environmental movement. The National Park Service idea grew out of a particular movement in U.S. environmentalist history. In the late 1800's, John Muir and other early preservationists guided the country to view intact nature as a rapidly depleting resource that had to be preserved or lost. They viewed nature as a creation of God that must kept in its most intact state and preservation was the most direct answer. This ideology led to the establishment of our National Park Service (Nash 1967: 132).

Environmentalism itself, however, has undergone transformations and the current state of the movement has taken on new form (Weber 2000). Volunteerism is a large component of the progress in modern environmentalism. Ryan et al. (2001) highlights that both private and public environmental organizations rely on the work of unpaid workers. As budgets tighten, managers see volunteers as a way to maintain environmental progress (Sarkar 2010: 3). Voluntary citizen environmental monitoring programs have spread to communities across the country while state and federal funds have been empowering local groups to take care of their own community's ecological health (Nerbonne and Nelson 2004).

Some argue this new wave of environmentalism shifts focus to local communities where individuals, not federal bureaucracies, are the drivers of environmental change. Rural, place-based grassroots ecosystem management (GREM) represents this new form of environmentalism (Weber 2000). Focused on connecting a variety of citizens among local communities, GREM circumvents government to achieve environmental goals. Core members of GREM movements are classified as, "citizens with the time, resources, and personal stake in the community" (Weber 2000: 240). The movement stresses a bottom-up approach to environmentalism as distinct from earlier waves of environmentalism. The GREM movement began in the late 1960s

and early 1970s, which also coincides with the establishment of volunteerism in the National Park Service. Like the VIP program, this new form of environmentalism relies on individuals who are willing and able to adopt extra burden in an effort to protect the commons.

In sum, the growth of volunteerism in the National Park Service corresponds with a shift in the broader environmental movement. The Former EPA commissioner Carol Browner stated that environmental protection is best when, “people work together to protect public health and the environment, community by community, watershed by watershed” (Nerbonne and Nelson 2004: 819). Even the work that government supports is placing stronger focus on community and individual empowerment. Thus, the enormous growth in the supply of volunteers in the VIP program should also be contextualized within the new environmental norms that encourage volunteerism.

4. Supply Conclusions

Coproduction in the national parks would not be possible without the large supply of willing volunteers that currently exist. This supply is explained by the distinct set of motivations that exist for volunteerism in the parks. The national parks exist at the crossroads of environmentalism and public service and appeal to a wide variety of individuals. The altruistic motivations from each field engage different populations that all find their interests met by national park volunteerism. Additionally, there is a range of benefits that volunteers derive from volunteering with the parks, which fulfill egoistic motivations. Donating time to a national park allows individuals to promote and fulfill themselves, making the work supremely desirable. Meanwhile, the popularity of park volunteer work coincides with general trends of volunteerism in the environmental movement.

Ultimately, the combination of these factors has led to a massive pool of volunteers in the National Park Service. Today, over 200,000 individuals are willing to donate their time to the national parks and each year the population is growing. This constitutes the supply side of volunteerism that drives the existence of coproduction in the Park Service. In order for coproduction to be implemented, however, this supply must be met by the agency's demand.

Chapter 4

Organizational Poverty- Demand

While supply of volunteers has been established, agency demand must also be present in order for coproduction to become utilized. As Ferris (1988) claims, demand is essential because it drives an agency to become receptive to a supply of volunteers. Demand in public service results from insufficient resources. Public agencies are expected to provide certain services and if their appropriations are inadequate, demand for additional resources arises. Thus, in order to understand the demand for coproduction in the Park Service, it must be determined why current resource appropriations are insufficient to cover services in the national parks.

An objective analysis of the National Park Service's budget and fiscal strength is formidable. Many have attempted to present the National Park Service's dire financial state (Feitlinger et al. 2004; Galvin and Pitcaithley 2008; NPCA Report; ANPR Report). Current reports address a wide array of details and intricacies because the Park Service is an ever-changing and dynamic system. The synthesis of these assessments will provide the most complete explanation of why federal appropriations are insufficient to cover national park services.

This chapter argues that the national parks have been in a historical state of organizational poverty,²⁰ which drives demand for the additional input of resources. While annual appropriations have been increasing, they are incapable of supporting the modern Park Service. Due to a mix of increasing responsibilities, rising fixed costs, an insurmountable maintenance backlog, and budgeting dynamics, annual appropriations are insufficient to support

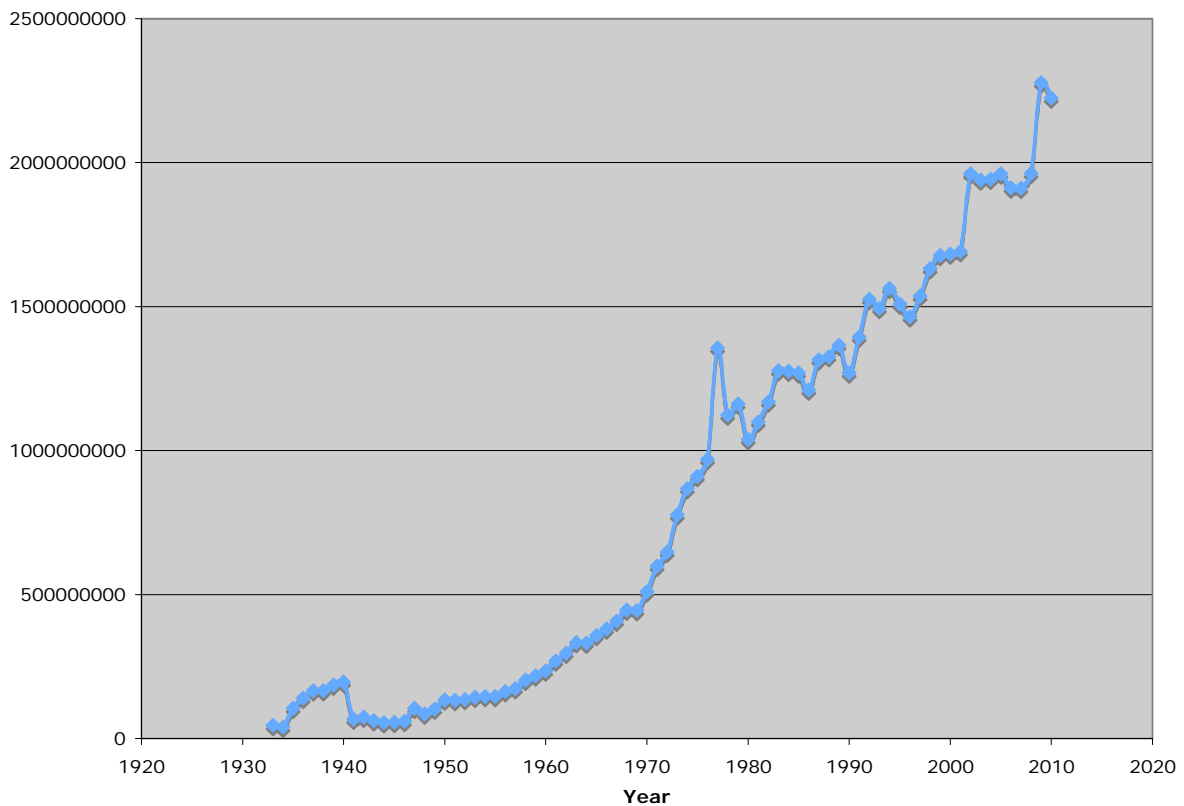
²⁰ The term "organizational poverty" was created by former National Park Service Chief Historian Dwight Pitcaithley (Galvin and Pitcaithley 2008).

the national parks on their own. Out of this state of organizational poverty, the national parks have acquired a demand for volunteers.

1. Unexpected Loss

On a surface-level view, the National Park Service operating budget²¹ has increased. Figure 4 shows increases in the operational budget for the National Park Service adjusted for inflation. While yearly changes in appropriations can be sporadic, the budget of the national parks has generally been increasing. Many would view this data and infer that the parks are not experiencing any fiscal strain.

Figure 4. Annual National Park Service operations appropriations adjusted in 2009 terms, 1933-2010.



Source: Rettie 1995: Appendix 5; National Park Service Datasheet

²¹ For budget analysis, the operating budget is used and other budget line items are disregarded. Other budgeting items fund other initiatives, such as land acquisition, and do not affect a park's ability to operate.

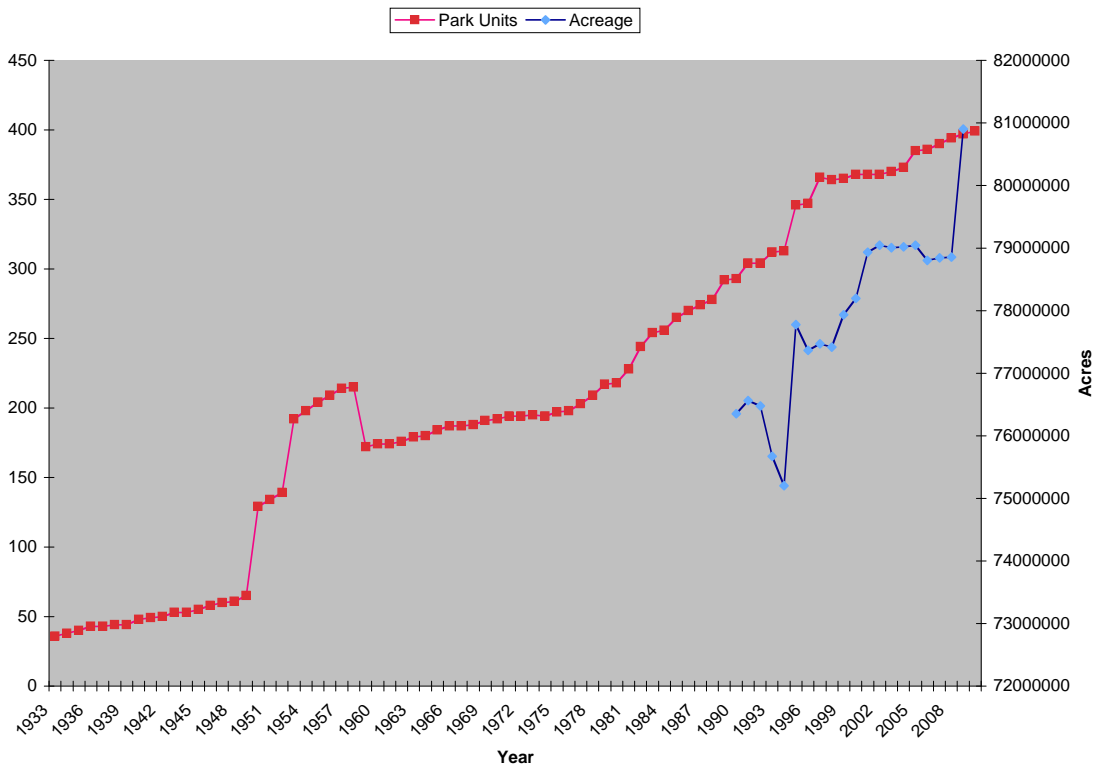
However, to fully understand the strength of the national parks, one must account for elements that are reducing the power of park resources. The primary factors eroding the National Park Service’s finances are increased responsibilities, rising fixed costs, the maintenance backlog and budgeting dynamics. None of these factors are accounted for in a cursory glance at the National Park Service operating budget and, together, they reframe a National Park Service that is in serious need.

1.1. Increased Responsibilities

1.1.1. More Land

Figure 5 shows the park units and acreage that the National Park Service is responsible for caring for each year. They indicate the increasing land management responsibility the Park Service has been adopting for decades.

Figure 5. The land management responsibility of the National Park Service in terms of park units and acreage, 1933-2010.



Source: Rettie 1995: Appendix 5; www.nature.nps.gov/stats

The protection of new land necessitates increased resources. Meanwhile, each new park unit demands start up costs and infrastructural investment. Between 1970 and 1980, the total park acreage more than doubled when President Jimmy Carter set aside massive tracts of land in Alaska for National monument and park status (Walls 2009). Such changes are dramatic and without commensurate increases in allocations, it strains the Park Service.

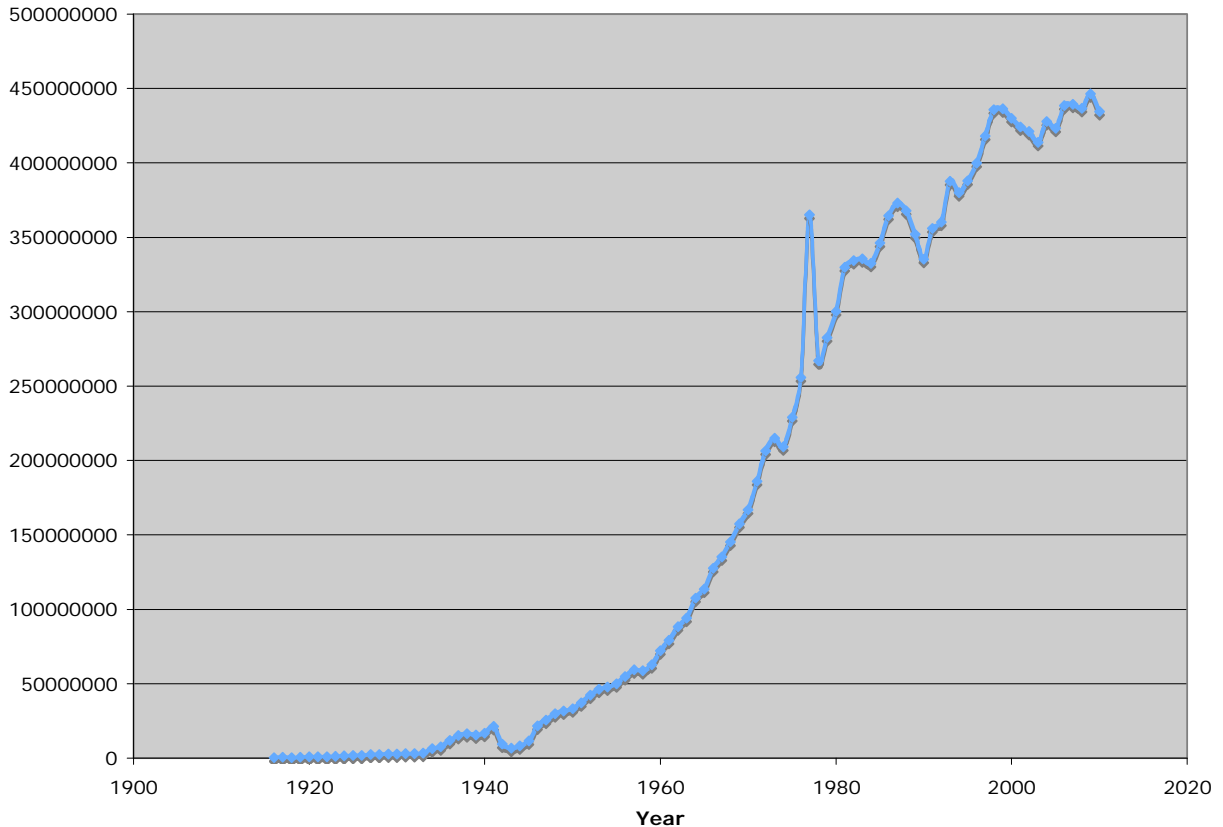
Often, the units added are not to the benefit of the parks. Instead, Congressmen know that national parks are popular and use their creation as a way to please constituents. Former Director James Ridenour observed, “many of the units being voted in by Congress are not worthy of national recognition but get voted in anyway. That thins the quality of the system and puts additional financial demands on an already badly underfunded program” (Ridenour 1994: 17). These additions, which Ridenour also defined as “park barrel” projects, can be a detriment to the Park Service. Additions not requested by the Park Service that come without appropriate increases in funding, redirect existing funding in undesirable ways (Ansson 1998). Truthfully, not all historic areas and protected lands must necessarily be under the care of the National Park Service and during his time in Washington, Ridenour encouraged local and regional ownership of important sites, which he did not feel were worthy of Park Service protection (Ridenour 1994). Legislators have expected the National Park Service to make frequent new acquisitions but have been unrealistic about the resources necessary to establish and healthfully maintain new units and land.

1.1.2. More People

The national parks have also been providing services for an increasing amount of visitors (Ansson 1998). Figure 6 charts trends in recreational visits to the national parks. These

increases imply more responsibility for the parks to educate and serve the public because the demand for ranger programs, visitor staff and even maintenance all increase when more visitors enter the national parks.

Figure 6. Annual recreation visits to the National Park Service, 1916-2010.



Source: Rettie 1995: Appendix 5; www.nature.nps.gov/stats

An NBC report in 1996 raised the issue of increasing visitors and how it put strain on the limited resources of the parks. Without adequate funding to accommodate the increases in visitors, park services were reduced. At the time, the superintendent of Yellowstone National Park claimed, “there are fewer information programs, fewer rangers to answer questions, and fewer rangers to come and help them when they’re in trouble” (In Depth (National Parks) 1996). The struggle illuminated in the report continues, and it is not uncommon for there to be one park employee for every 80,000 visitors that show up to the parks each year (Ansson 1998). When increased

visitation is not met by increased funding, the Park Service's responsibilities become insurmountable.

1.1.3. Higher Expectations

The Park Service is the caretaker of some of America's most treasured lands and is responsible for preserving them "unimpaired" (National Park Service Act of 1916). However, this mandate is requiring more of the national parks than originally conceived.

The fragile natural environments that the National Park Service cares for are becoming harder to maintain in their natural state. First, as climate change begins to have irreversible effects on the landscape, national parks are expected to expend more resources to protect their land. These changes could be drastic and are already starting to appear within the parks (Handwerk 2006). Furthermore, increased awareness of environmental issues has created more demand for science-based resource management and that leads to more work for the national parks. Finally, the increased popularity of parks has meant increased development in surrounding areas. Termed "gateway communities", the developing areas around national parks create increased urban challenges, such as smog, sound and light pollution (Ansson 1998). Each of these challenges requires parks to stretch existing appropriations.

The "Endangered Rangers" report by the NPCA raises the concern of increased security needs in the national parks. Since the Park Service protects some of our country's most prized possessions, such as the Statue of Liberty, Mount Rushmore and many others, it is greatly affected by the demands of homeland security. In a single year, the parks have spent as much as \$8 million providing extra defense to areas of concern (Feitlinger et al. 2004). The Association of National Park Rangers has corroborated the NPCA's observation and stated that the National Park Service spends \$65,000 every day the United States is listed at Code Orange. Beyond

financial implications, personnel are frequently removed from Western parks to bolster staffing in higher priority landmarks and infrastructure in the East. “One park superintendent notes ironically that when the nation reaches Code Orange he is directed to increase security in his park while he is required to detail up to 25% of his law enforcement commissioned rangers to provide security at other parks” (ANPR Report). All the while, the parks have not been allowed to ask for more funding to cover the increased security costs (ANPR Report). The demands of homeland security are the final example of the increased expectations that are eroding Park Service operation budgets.

One park superintendent plainly states the responsibilities of the parks are not backed up with sufficient government support. “When it’s the caretaker of all of the history of all the country as well as some really outstanding natural resource real estate, is it funded fully for that mandate? It’s not” (Superintendent A). More land, more visitors and higher expectations constitute the increased responsibilities the Park Service continues to endure. These responsibilities are not often provided for in full and this puts strain on the existing budget.

1.2. Rising Fixed Costs

“Death by a Thousand Cuts” has been a phrase used to describe the slow but persistent weakening of the National Park Service due to increased fixed costs (NPCA Report; ANPR Report). These fixed costs are various but essentially, the cost of doing business in the national parks has steadily increased. However, increases in appropriations have not been commensurate. The result is the deterioration of the National Park Service’s buying power.

1.2.1. Personnel Costs

The NPCA cites escalating personnel costs as the main reason national park budgeting issues have worsened. In 2004, the national parks were required to give a 4.1% pay raise to paid

staff but only received a 1.4% increase in their budget to cover the demands (NPCA Report). However, in order to abide by US law, park superintendents are still required to produce these funds. Consequently, other parts of the park are whittled away to meet the new mandate. Money may be slowly drained from interpretation or maintenance departments in order to provide extra salary money for all employees within the park (Feitlinger et al. 2004). Filling the salary gap then weakens other areas of the national parks.

1.2.2. Materials

Because a large portion of park work is visitor services, the increasing costs of materials, such as toilet paper, gasoline and printed brochures, can whittle away operating budgets. Park superintendents claim this can be a substantial burden because these are fixed costs (Superintendent A). A park is unable to cut these expenditures so the general operating budget absorbs any increases.

The consequence of these increasing costs in operations has been the emergence of inner-park cannibalism. “The growth [has come] from internal movements from one appropriation to another inside the Park Service budget” (Galvin). Parks must sap strength from certain programming to cover operational shortfalls. Ultimately, the process weakens the park as a whole because other areas become strained. One such area is infrastructural integrity, which is addressed in the next section.

1.3. Maintenance Backlog

The National Park Service has a sizeable infrastructural responsibility. It is estimated that the parks care for: 20,000 buildings; 1,000 campgrounds; 1,600 wastewater systems; 1,300 water systems; and 26,000 historic structures (Galvin and Pitcaithley 2008). For years, the National Park Service has been unable to complete all its necessary projects and it has amounted

to a sizeable maintenance backlog. The NPCA estimates the national parks are currently suffering from \$9 billion of unfinished projects. This can include anything from building repairs to plumbing systems. Furthermore, the NPCA quantifies the critical backlog to be at \$2 billion. Without these repairs, the Park Service is unable to provide basic services to visitors, such as bathrooms, visitor centers and protection of historical treasures (NPCA Report). Often, the longer maintenance projects remain unfinished, the more they will ultimately cost. In the end, it means more expenditures for the Park Service and increased erosion of federal appropriations.

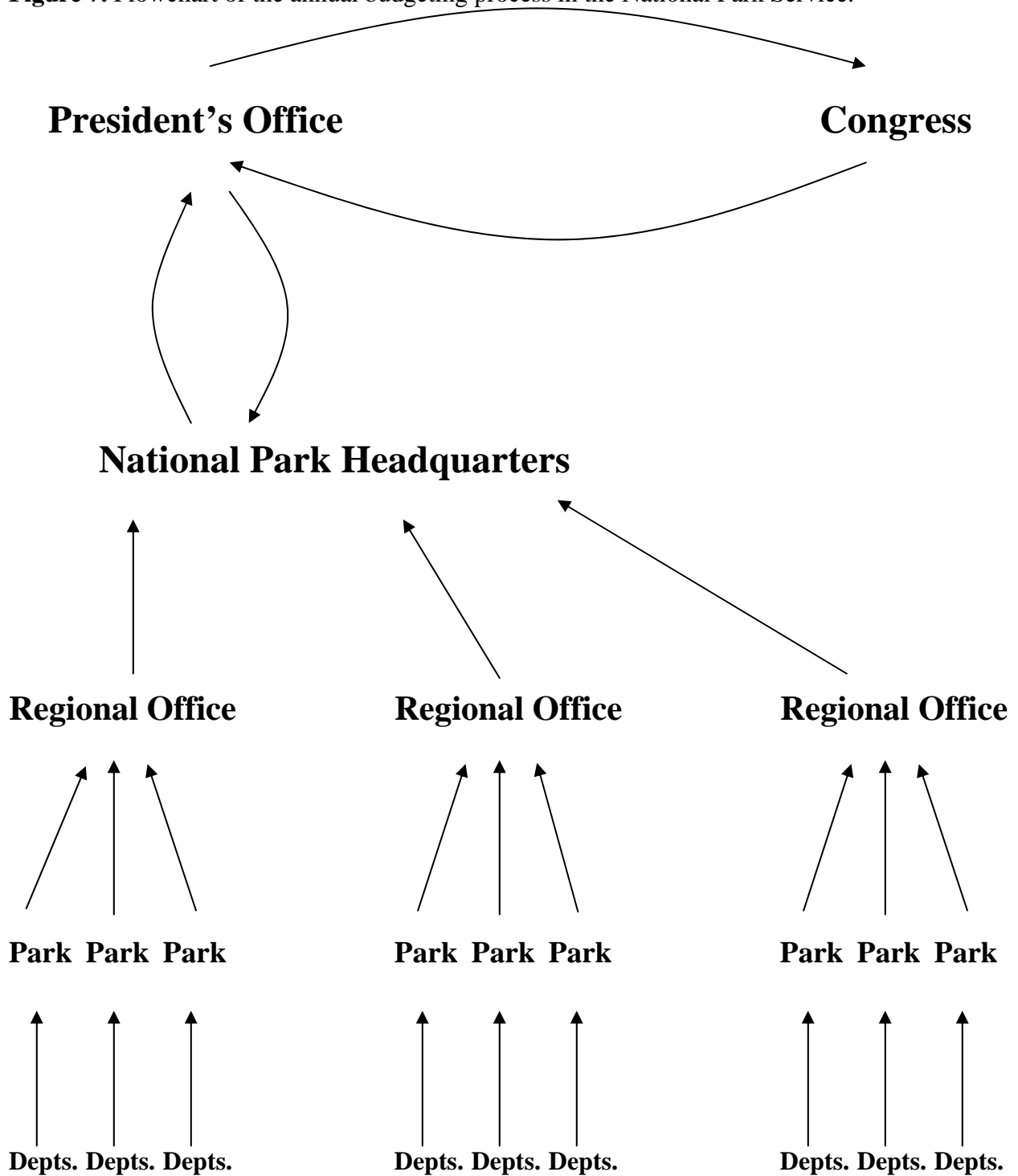
1.4. Budgeting Uncertainty and Misdirected Money

The way money is distributed in the parks can affect the power of the Park Service operating budget. Annual budgeting for the national parks essentially travels through the entire management structure of the National Park Service. It starts at individual parks where superintendents, the primary managers of their respective parks, sit down with the heads of each department. The chiefs of interpretation, maintenance, law enforcement and all the other departments discuss their resource needs for the upcoming year. Once the superintendent completes these talks, they draft up their park's funding request for the fiscal year. These requests are aggregated and reconciled at the regional office level before a recommendation is made to the central staff. At this stage, the seven regions²² submit their requests to National Park Service headquarters in Washington, D.C. Finally, central staff projects their financial needs and compile all appropriation requests into a single National Park Service budget request. This request is included in the Department of the Interior's proposed budget before it is presented to the President's staff.

²² The seven regions are: Alaska Area, Northeast, Midwest, National Capital, Intermountain, Southeast, and Pacific West

Representatives of the President cut or add things to the proposal to create a document that is in line with the administration's goals. The revised budget is sent back to National Park Service headquarters where the changes are negotiated and approved. This final agreement appears in the President's budget presented to Congress each year. As the legislature parleys the President's budget, national park appropriations may be changed. Congressmen may cut funding they see as unnecessary or fight to insert line items that may benefit parks in their districts. In the end, these changes are sent back to the President's desk along with the rest of the budget and, if he finds the alterations acceptable, he signs it into law for the year. Figure 7 is a flowchart representation of the budgeting process for the National Park Service. It depicts the stages national park appropriations follow before they are enacted in particular units.

Figure 7. Flowchart of the annual budgeting process in the National Park Service.



The opportunity for operations budgets to change at the hands of the legislature is immense and Former Director Ridenour stated that he “found Congress and, worse yet, congressional staffs

running [the Park Service]” (Ridenour 1994: 77). When funding does arrive, it can come in the form of pork barrel projects and unnecessary political spending. Between 1983 and 1993, the NPS received over \$1 billion more in total appropriations than requested, but nearly all of it was devoted to projects not even requested in the National Park Service’s budget recommendation (Ridenour 1994: 115).

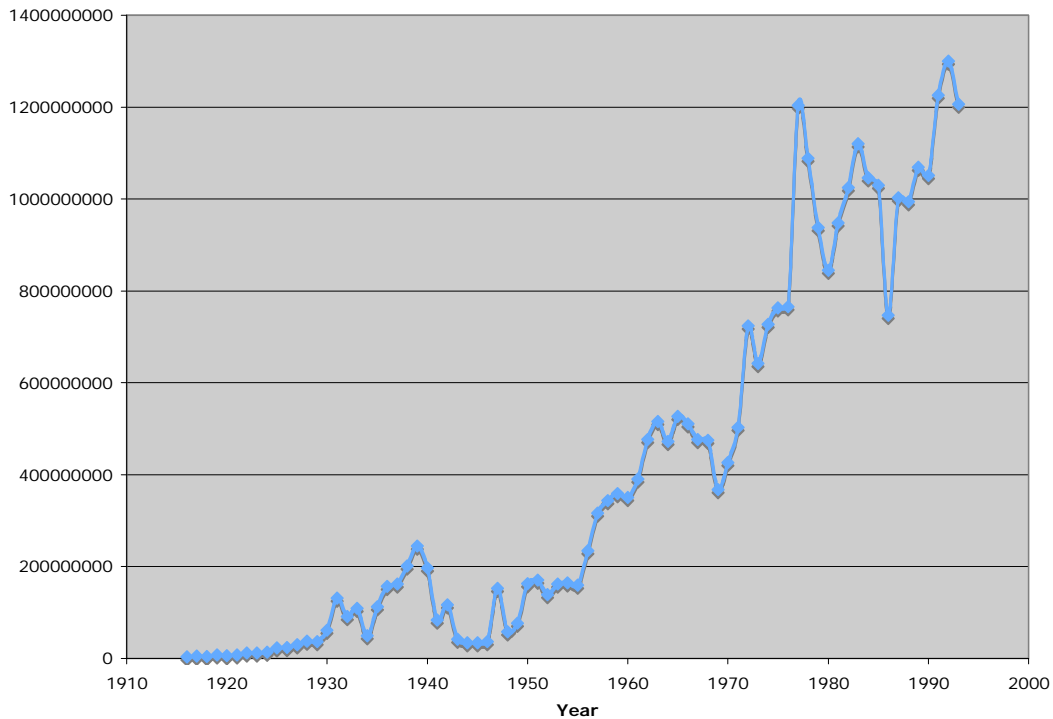
This budget is then passed down the line of management until it reaches individual parks again. Finally, months after superintendents submitted their requests, they are handed their enacted budget. Superintendents then distribute funds in ways that will protect their park’s resources, satisfy visitors and adhere to federal laws. Consequently these budgets are stretched and strategically managed in order to comprehensively uphold the national park mission. Fulfilling all the national park duties on a tight budget means negotiating where available funds are most necessary and effective.

The budgeting process is ongoing and much can change from the time superintendents request funding and when they are handed their allocation. Park requests are usually cautious to begin with, as park management understands only reasonable requests will even be considered, and cuts to already conservative proposals can entail very tight budgets. In years where federal budgets are delayed, superintendents are faced with even more challenges. In such scenarios, parks are advised to spend just underneath the previous year’s budget in case they receive decreased appropriations (Superintendent A). And given current economic woes, it seems that 2010 could be the “high water point” (Superintendent B).

Simply put, “the Congress’ commitment to the National Park Service is very bumpy” (Rettie). Figure 8 shows the raw budget of the National Park Service. This reflects the erratic increases and decreases in Congressional appropriations to the Park Service each year. The

haphazard and unpredictable growth of the Park Service's budget can be troublesome for park managers who hope to provide reliable services.

Figure 8. Raw operating budget for the National Park Service, 1916-1993.

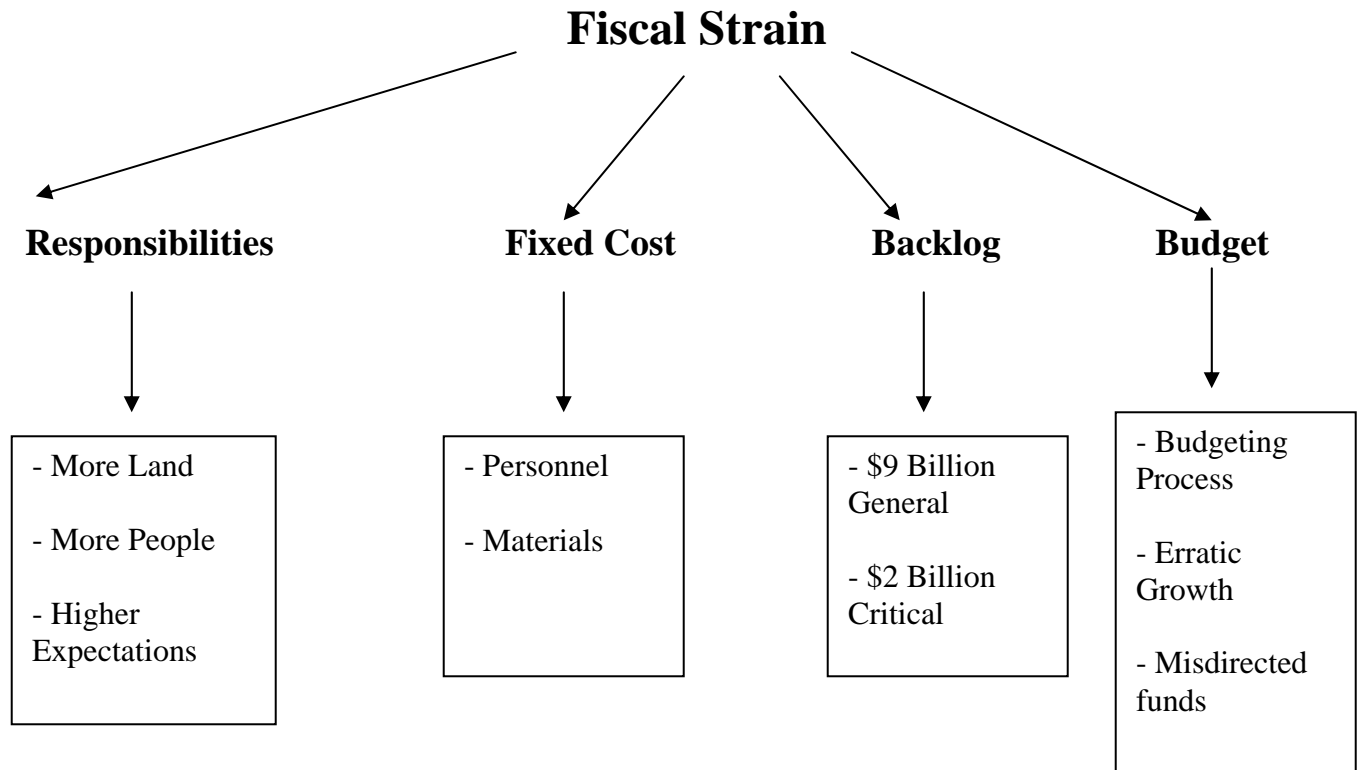


Source: Rettie 1995: Appendix 5

In sum, the structure and process of budgeting in the national parks leads to tenuousness and uncertainty for park managers attempting to project their resources from year-to-year.

Figure 9 is a graphical representation of the fiscal strain that exists within the National Park Service. It is a clear presentation of the factors that have created a state of organizational poverty in the national parks. The combination of these factors put significant strain on the finances of the National Park Service. It reframes the increasing Park Service operations budget presented earlier.

Figure 9. Graphical representation of fiscal strain in the National Park Service



2. Demand Conclusions

The Park Service's operational budget is constantly being eroded by increased responsibilities, rising fixed costs, the maintenance backlog and budgeting dynamics. The increasing operations budget presented at the beginning of this chapter can no longer be taken at face value. Rather, it must be viewed with the incorporation of the erosive factors discussed in this chapter. The implication of these factors is a suffering National Park Service that often has to cut services in order to stay afloat.

When Congressional allocations did not meet operations requests in the early 1990s, former Director Ridenour stated he, "had no choice but to cut back on programs and people. In some cases that meant shutting down facilities completely or at least for a period of time. [His] instructions were to make the cuts where they would have the least impact on the visiting public" (Ridenour 1994: 107). The strains Ridenour faced continue today and it can have significant

effects on organizational health and stability. Often forcing the parks to reduce staff and facilities, “the government has just not taken care of these beautiful treasures” (Ridenour 1994: 108).

Decades of financial woes have thrust the national parks into a state of organizational poverty. With all the pressures highlighted in this chapter, the resources currently given to the parks are insufficient to cover their responsibilities and a demand for additional resources has grown. This has driven the park to be sympathetic toward external help. The donated time of volunteers can fill this need and cover gaps in Park Service appropriations. Thus, the organizational poverty in the national parks constitutes the demand side of coproduction in the National Park Service.

Chapter 5

Prevailing Volunteerism

Thus far, this thesis has explained the supply and demand factors that drive the presence of volunteerism in the National Park Service. That analysis was framed on existing literature in the field of coproduction. However, current research on coproduction does not address why the use of volunteers prevails over other management responses. When a public service is faced with a difference between its responsibilities and its resources to fulfill those responsibilities, coproduction is one tool to bridge that gap. So when coproduction is utilized, why does it prevail over other management strategies? This chapter explores this phenomenon in the National Park Service.

Our federal government serves the needs of the citizens of the United States of America. If we, as a country, feel an agency is not functioning optimally, there are two direct ways the federal government can act. First, resources may remain the same and an agency's responsibility can be reduced. This implies the service has expanded beyond the scope of government. Or, the service can remain the same and funding can be increased to provide more adequate resources. This implies the service is important but has not been adequately provided for. However, this is not the case in the national parks; they continue to acquire more responsibilities, but do not receive adequate resources to maintain them.

In the national parks, coproduction has become the management response. Volunteers have allowed the parks to maintain services without receiving commensurate funding. However, volunteers have not deliberately been used by the Park Service to reduce federal commitment. Nevertheless, in many parks, volunteers are used in every single facet of park operations and some units would not be able to open their doors without the volunteer program (Superintendent

F). All individuals interviewed agreed that volunteers help fill in gaps in the parks. Why, then, has volunteerism prevailed as a response in the national parks?

This chapter develops two theories, hollow state and short circuited-democracy, to explain why coproduction has prevailed in the National Park Service. Hollow state theory explains that the federal government is either unwilling or incapable of providing the services of the national parks without inputs from volunteers. This theory implies that the continued integration of volunteers is necessary to maintain the modern National Park Service. The short-circuited democracy theory explains that volunteers are shielding the public from complete information on the needs of our National Park Service, which in turn reduces political pressure to increase park funding. This theory implies that volunteerism would subside if visitors were given more complete information on the health of the national parks. It is concluded that elements of both theories allow volunteerism to prevail in the national parks.

1. Hollow State

The hollow state concept grew out of the “hollow corporation”, which described businesses that subcontracted out their internal production. Developed by H. Milton Milward, the hollow state explains governments that contract federal responsibilities out to external actors. Typically, this includes non-profits and private companies that receive federal funding to aid in the production of public services. These agreements often arise out of an inability or unwillingness for government to provide the services it has been entrusted (Milward 1996). The hollow state exists in a new form in the national parks. Through the VIP program, volunteers are contracted with to provide national park services. In this way, volunteerism can be understood as a sort of hollowing out of the state’s responsibility to protect, maintain and educate citizens in the parks.

Hollow state explains prevailing volunteerism from the perspective of internal operations. The theory can be broken down into three basic dimensions. First, in the absence of volunteers, the government would be unwilling to maintain current levels of service in the parks. Second, volunteers provide work that the government is incapable of providing. Finally, volunteers fill a central niche and without them the government would not be able to complete the national park mission. This section will explore these dimensions of hollow state theory to explain why volunteerism has prevailed in the Park Service.

1.1. Unwilling Government

The first dimension of the hollow state theory is that, in the absence of volunteers, the federal government would not maintain current levels of service. Is the government willing to uphold the national park mission, as defined in the National Park Service Organic Act in 1916?²³ Objectively, it seems entirely feasible for the United States Government to fulfill such responsibilities. However, the Park Service has changed substantially since its foundation in 1916. When Stephen Mather, the Park Service's first director, was given his first year appropriations of \$253,647,²⁴ he had only to care for 36 park units. Furthermore, such care essentially included opening gates, protecting borders and providing basic recreation opportunities for the 350,000 visitors who entered the parks that year. Since then, the individuals who pass through the national park gates each year has grown to over 400 million, hundreds of park units must be maintained and the scope of the Park Service has changed dramatically. As a poster child for American environmentalism, the national parks are now expected to tackle challenges such as resource use, sustainability and climate change. In short, the Park Service has

²³ Reproduced from earlier in the thesis, the mission statement is to: "Conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

²⁴ Equivalent to \$4,938,496 in 2009

developed in ways the Congressmen in the early 20th century may have never anticipated. Consequently, the government may not be willing to provide all the services that have developed over the past century.

During the Congressional hearing on the Volunteers-in-Parks Act in 1970, Director Hartzog was asked about his feelings on filling proposed volunteer positions with paid staff.

Mr. Kyl: If you could get the money you need to hire the personnel you think you ought to have as employees of the park system, would you prefer that alternative to having volunteer employees?

Mr. Hartzog: Well, very frankly, Mr. Kyl, I wouldn't ask for all of that money to do all of this living history interpretation that we do, because I think it can be done just as well with volunteers and I don't think it would be the most effective way to spend the tax payer's money. Some of them we couldn't actually employ as government employees. They are too young, for example (Congressional Hearing: 6).²⁵

At the core of Hartzog's statement is the nebulous role of the federal government in providing national park services. As a public service, national park programming should theoretically be supported by the commons, not a few individuals who have taken extra onus upon themselves. However, as the quote indicates, it has become acceptable for some aspects of the national parks to be divested of their collective ownership.

It seems unlikely that the government is willing to provide a thriving National Park Service on its own. Superintendent B claims in reference to his volunteers, "we couldn't do it without them." He maintains that this is a mantra his park adheres to when communicating to

²⁵ Hartzog's mention of youth is in reference to historical re-enactment work in the parks that required the use of children below the age of federal employment. This serves as another example of how government can be seen as incapable of satisfying the unique needs of National Park Programming.

volunteers the invaluable services they provide. In the absence of volunteers, would parks get funding to compensate? “No, not even in the good times and certainly not in the bad times” (Superintendent B). Interestingly, when asked if more funding was possible, some superintendents expressed a desire to see volunteer management budgeting increase. “I think that [the federal government] need[s] to make sure that they fund the support for volunteers in national parks” (Superintendent A). These sentiments indicate an increasing reliance on volunteers in the Park Service. Without them, the parks would not be given the resources necessary to compensate for their absence.

1.2. Incapable Government

The second dimension of the hollow state theory is that volunteers provide work that cannot be replicated. In this way, the government is incapable of provisioning the services provided by the volunteers. First, volunteers can become a park’s best advocates. When citizens become intimately engaged with a park, it can increase their dedication to that place. “You’re building your constituents... If volunteers get to know the organizations and the dedicated people, they will then become loyalists” (Superintendent D). Volunteers often function as important ambassadors for the parks in local communities (Superintendents E, F) and this linkage would not be as strong in their absence.

Volunteers can also be supremely dedicated and qualified. Many volunteers come to the parks purely for the love of protecting and caring for them. Some of them have retired from highly specialized fields and may provide the Park Service with skills that would typically demand the highest pay grades in the federal government. Some examples include specialized engineering, mountaineering and rescue medicine (Superintendent C). Superintendent B stated, “some of these volunteers, they’ve lived here a long time, they know the park better than a lot of

the staff do because they're out there hiking in it all the time so their ability to provide good quality information and assistance to visitors is incredible" (Superintendent B). This displays that there are some services in the park that volunteers can provide better than paid employees.

Finally, there are some jobs that are suited only for volunteers. One superintendent claims that some positions are "perfect volunteer experiences. I wouldn't put a paid employee living in a campground full-time. That wouldn't make sense from an efficiency standpoint no matter how much funding we had but it's a perfect job for a volunteer" (Superintendent E). The quote references campground hosts, a job always performed by volunteers; individuals RV camp in a campground for a season and serve as a general informational resource for visitors. Jobs such as this may just be best suited for volunteer populations, regardless of fiscal health in the Park Service.

1.3. Mission Coherence

There are ways that volunteerism completes the mission of the National Park Service. In these cases, the government would not be able to fulfill its duty without the integration of volunteers. The VIP program "provide[s] opportunities for every age group and culture to get involved in public land management responsibilities... That is critical... What a great way to introduce people to how government works" (Superintendent D). Getting citizens involved in their country's nature preservation is an empowering tool that can engage the public with the parks in a unique way. Providing for the enjoyment and benefit of the American people is a core tenet of the Park Service and, as discussed in chapter 3, volunteering with parks can provide this to the individual. Superintendent A claims, "the most important part of the volunteer program is engagement of the American public in the stewardship of the national parks... So even if you had, in theory, 100 percent budget covering all core responsibilities of a park, you would still

want a vibrant and robust volunteer program.” This indicates that parks, by the nature of their mission, are incomplete without the work of volunteers.

1.4. Hollow State Implications

Hollow state theory can explain why volunteerism prevails in the parks. The first two dimensions of the hollow state, unwilling government and incapable government, imply a lack of faith in the government to provide the modern system of national parks alone. Thus, while the government has taken on the responsibility to provide the services of the national parks, without the volunteers, they would not actually be provided.

There have been calls to increase the existing pool of volunteerism in the national parks in order to alleviate financial burden on the federal government (Beckwith 1981). However, such a process is innately contradictory to the concept of a public service. As a federal agency, all Americans support the parks because the park ideal is important to our identity as a nation. Encouraging the use of volunteers to cut government expenditure is a tool of privatization that would forever change the function of parks in our society. Whether or not this is a healthy change for the parks is a separate issue. But as long as individuals wish to have their parks protected by the government, the concept of substituting volunteers for government responsibility is innately flawed.

The third dimension of the hollow state, mission coherence, implies that volunteerism is a necessary aspect of the Park Service, regardless of federal funding. From this perspective, government is inextricably tied to the work of volunteers. Without volunteer contributions, government fails to uphold the national park mission.

In any case, according to hollow state theory, the federal government must contract some work out to volunteers. What ensues is the creation of a hollow state not explored before- a

hollow state in which the government must contract with volunteers, however informally, in order to succeed. Whether volunteers are compensating for government ineptness or complementing the national park mission, volunteerism will maintain its strong relationship with the National Park Service.

2. Short-circuited Democracy

William Parr Capes' The Modern City and Its Government details the components of successfully functioning democratic systems. An efficient democracy relies on equal parts conscientious citizenship and competent officials. "Good city government can be as severely handicapped through indifferent citizenship as through apathetic administration" (Capes 1922: 14). Capes claims that without a committed and informed citizenship, the democratic process begins to fail. "However conscientious may be the effort of a public official accurately to gauge and make effective the will of the people, he cannot fully succeed unless the citizens intelligently cooperate with him by making known their wants... Citizens, however, cannot exercise that obligation effectively if they are ignorant about their government and the community in which they live" (Capes 1922: 14).

It is true that citizen ignorance is an aspect to any democracy functioning in an imperfect world. However, it is reasonable that those who have the desire to be civically engaged must also have the ability to express that interest. Frederick Cleveland's Organized Democracy discusses the feedback loop between legislators and citizens. He claims it is necessary for a thriving democracy to give citizens the opportunity to connect with their representatives. He states, "the problem of to-day is to provide the means whereby acts of governmental agents may be made known to the people- to supply the link which is missing between the government and citizenship... Efficiency in the handling of highly complex, technical questions requires that

conclusions shall be based on accurate information... Concrete and accurate information about results requires that the recorded facts shall reach the people” (Cleveland 1913: 454). Cleveland claims that, in order for citizens to provide feedback to their representatives, they must be given accurate information on the health of their tax-supported programs.

Short-circuited democracy is the second theory developed to explain why volunteerism has prevailed in the parks. When visitors enter a national park, they are constantly evaluating the value of the public good being provided to them. Individuals essentially determine whether their property is being appropriately managed and maintained. If they leave satisfied, citizens feel content with the state of their public good. However, if they leave dissatisfied, something must be changed. This could come in the form of shrinking the scope of the Park Service or increasing its funding. Once this feedback is communicated to political representatives, the Park Service should theoretically be altered to fit the needs of constituents more completely.

However, this section argues that visitors are not given the opportunity to accurately evaluate the national parks. Citizens expect the government to provision the parks and are content with the current services being provided. However, visitors are not aware that the services they are content with are not being provided fully by the government. This dynamic arises because the national parks have adopted a culture of hiding the hurt. This leads to visitor ignorance. If citizens want the government to fully fund the national parks, this sentiment will not be communicated to representatives because visitors perceive no problems. Short-circuited democracy theory implies that, if citizens were given more accurate information, federal funding would increase and the role of volunteerism would diminish in the national parks.

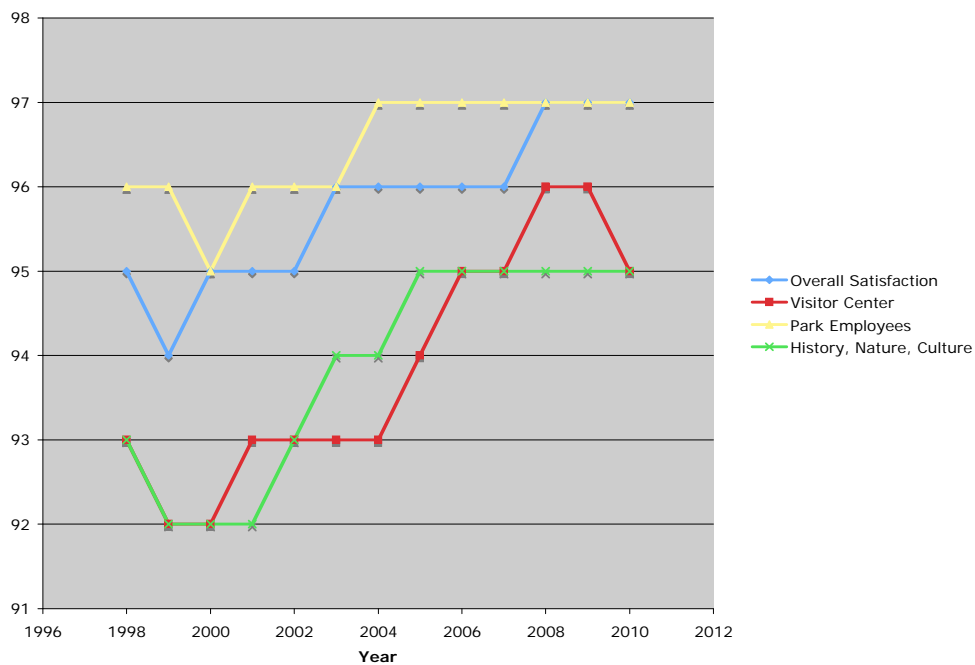
2.1. Citizens’ Expectations and Satisfaction

As an example of volunteerism in the parks, Superintendent B described his visitor center. “We may have 1 or 2 rangers on there, but on a busy day in the summer you’re going to get a line and if it’s just the rangers, the lines are going to be longer and people are going to have to wait longer to talk to a ranger, get their questions answered and they may get frustrated and leave. By having that extra volunteer or two there, the lines are shorter, they get in and out quicker, they get their questions answered. So we can provide the basic levels of service but we provide better customer service because of [the volunteers]” (Superintendent B). The question this quote incites is, what do citizens expect from their national parks and what do they deem satisfactory service from this public good?

The national parks are a valued and important service to the American people. In a survey conducted in 2010 by Hart Research Associates for the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), a random sampling of citizens were asked about their support for the national parks. When asked how important it was for the “federal government to protect and support [the] parks,” 69% responded that it was “extremely important”, 19% “quite important” and 10% “somewhat important.” In short, this study suggests that 98% of our country feels the national parks are an important responsibility of the federal government. Asked in a time of fiscal crisis, this is overwhelmingly high. Interestingly, national parks also seem to have bipartisan support. The political views of respondents were varied but a majority aligned themselves as moderates or conservatives. Conservative values typically repulse from the idea of expanded government and increased public ownership. However, national parks were still seen as an important dimension of federal responsibility (Hart Research Associates Survey). From this study, we can extrapolate that Americans value their parks and want them to exist as a public good, maintained by citizen taxes.

Next, we must understand how satisfactorily people feel the government is upholding the responsibility to protect the parks. The Park Studies Unit is a branch of the National Park Service’s Social Service Division and operates out of the University of Idaho. Since 1998, the Unit has been releasing reports on visitor satisfaction every year. Random visitors from a majority of the national park units are asked to fill out a visitor survey card that indicates their evaluation of the national parks. Figure 10 displays visitors’ percent satisfaction with specific services provided by the national parks. For purposes of this paper, 4 satisfaction categories are relevant: overall, visitor center, park employees and history/nature/culture. This is because volunteer work contributes to all of these categories. For the twelve years the Park Studies Unit has been recording visitor feedback, overall satisfaction with the National Park Service has never dipped below 94% while all 4 of the examined categories have been recorded between 92-97% satisfaction. Simply put, the National Park Service is a successful program that receives outstanding levels of approval from its citizen supporters.

Figure 10. Percent visitor satisfaction for overall national park services, 1998-2010.



Source: University of Idaho Park Studies Unit Visitor Survey Cards, <http://www.psu.uidaho.edu/>

This indicates that visitors are satisfied with the services being currently provided by the national parks.

However, the survey makes no mention of the contributions of volunteers. It can be assumed that the input of volunteers is partially responsible for such high ratings in all categories, including park employee satisfaction. The casual park visitor is not likely to make the distinction between park staff and volunteers when individuals are performing the same job. In visitor centers, volunteers work alongside rangers and a patron is likely to record their positive interactions with a park volunteer under the category “park employee” in this survey. Essentially, the combined output of park staff and volunteers is responsible for the positive results reflected in these studies.

The citizens of America expect their parks to be provided by the federal government and they are satisfied with the services currently provided. However, citizens are unaware that they are evaluating the combined efforts of federal employees and volunteers. This is because the distinction between staff and volunteers is not always clear.

2.2. A Blurred Line Between Volunteers and Paid Staff

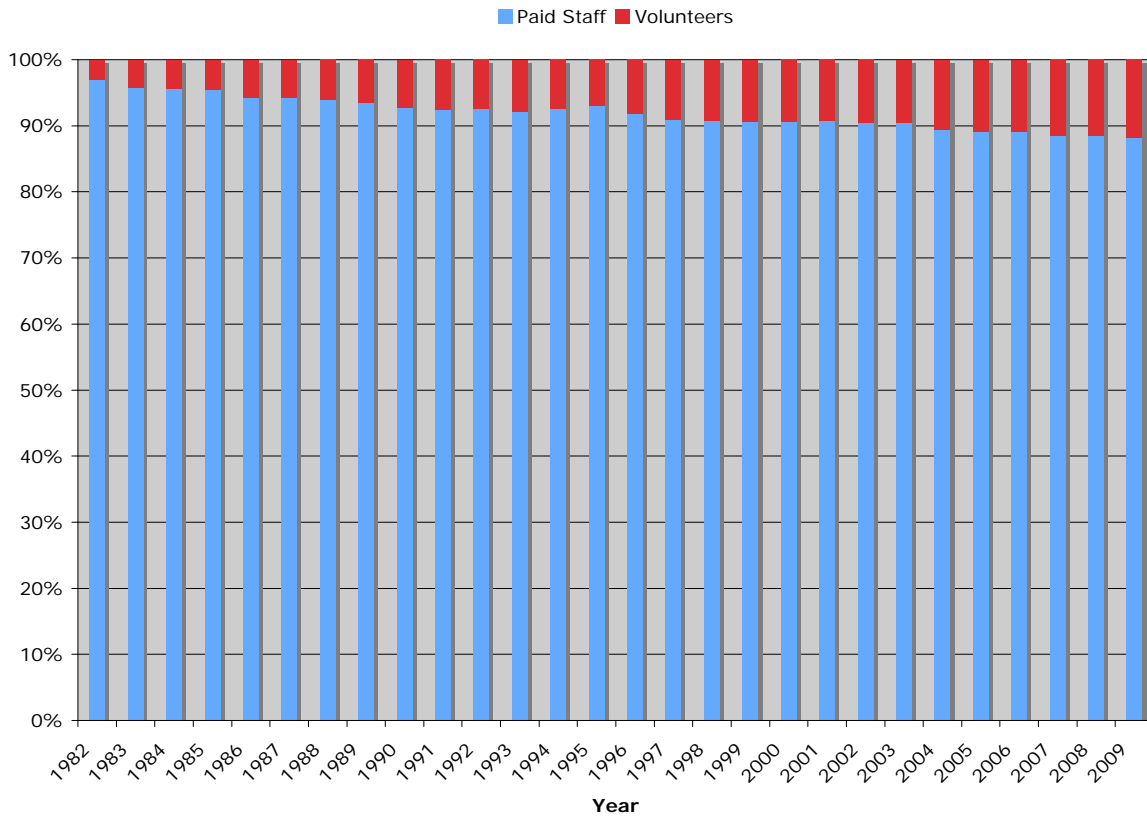
The issue that arises here is one of transparency. It is useful to hearken back to Cleveland’s claim that citizens must be given complete information in order to effectively evaluate the quality of their public services. His example is that it is not always easy for citizens to obtain documented information on their public services. “While it seems clear that a citizen, as such, has a right to know the facts about what is being done by the government and to have access to such evidence as may be found in public records, it is frequently made difficult for him to avail himself of this right” (Cleveland 1913: 109). Cleveland goes on to provide the

“instruments of precision which must be installed” in order to keep the public informed: a budget; a balance sheet; an operation account; a detail individual efficiency record and report; a system of cost accounts; a means for obtaining a detail statement of costs (Cleveland 1913: 455).

With regard to the National Park Service, these documents are easily accessible to the public and, with some investment, can absolutely be obtained. However, the National Park Service is a unique public service that demands a seventh, more obscure “instrument of precision”: *A clear public presentation of government contribution*. Most citizens form their impressions of the Service through their experience as visitors to a park. To the average observer, the quality and effectiveness of the services provided serves as the reporting mechanism of the national parks. Therefore, it is important that the information visitors receive while visiting a national park is as complete and clear as possible. This would be true of any other public service that deals largely with public *service*.

In order for visitors to truly assess their satisfaction with the national parks, they must make a distinction between paid employees and unpaid volunteers. Park patrons appear happy with the services provided and assume it is a result of their taxpayer dollars at work. In reality, however, the service they are evaluating is a result of the tax-supported employees in conjunction with significant contributions of volunteer work. Figure 11 shows the contributions of paid staff and volunteers to the overall man-hours needed to operate the national parks. The figure indicates that volunteers have steadily adopted a larger share of responsibility for providing national park services.

Figure 11. Percent of paid staff and volunteer contributions to overall man-hours needed to operate the national parks, 1982-2009.



Source: Volunteers-in-Parks Data Sheet; www.nature.nps.gov/stats

This volunteer work is provided at the expense of the individuals who donate their time and energy to the National Park Service, not federal funding powered by taxpayer support. If this voluntary component of national park work were removed, it is nearly impossible to imagine that visitor evaluations would yield such high results.

In the National Park Director’s Order #7, National Park Service volunteer uniforms are given specific requirements. The order stipulates, “VIPs must be readily identifiable as such, in a manner appropriate for their duties. VIP uniform items include the official VIP patch (shoulder or cap), nametag, and the VIP lapel pin. VIPs must not wear any part of the official NPS uniform or be dressed in a manner that attempts to duplicate its appearance” (Director’s Order # 7: 10.1). The National Park Service does have distinct designs for volunteers and paid staff.

Figure 12 presents volunteer and employee uniform patches. Furthermore, it provides pictures of paid employees and volunteers on duty. These are presented side-by-side so the reader may see their relative similarity. Visitors who are looking to make the distinction between staff and volunteers can certainly do so. However, to the casual visitor, the differences are unlikely to make a lasting impact.

Figure 12. Volunteer and employee uniform patches in addition photos of a volunteer and employee on duty



Source: Photos from the National Park Service website www.nps.gov

When the average visitor leaves a visitor center, their impressions of the park are not likely to be affected by whether or not they were helped by a volunteer or paid staff member.

Volunteers in the parks are coming to be managed almost identically to paid park staff. In many parks, job descriptions are posted and advertised while potential volunteers must apply for coveted positions.²⁶ Volunteer coordinators review their applications and determine if their skill set is well suited for the volunteer opening. If volunteers are hired, they are put under the responsibility of a department supervisor and evaluated based on their performance. When asked for future job references, the Park Service will look to the feedback given by the volunteer's supervisor in order to make an accurate recommendation. Volunteer Coordinator B states, "I use the same terminology as we do with employees because they apply, we interview, we check references and we hire them. We just aren't going to give them a paycheck" (Volunteer Coordinator B). This provides further evidence that many volunteers in the Park Service have come to be used in the same way as paid staff.

The truth is that much of the volunteers in parks function the same as paid staff (Wade 2005: 65). "Volunteers across the Service are often times being used in the same way in the exact same location alongside permanent employees. Administratively you can make a distinction... but at face value, most people would say they are pretty much doing the same thing" (Superintendent D). The result is that the public has no perception of which services their government provides and which is donated by volunteers.

Volunteer Coordinator B states that in their park, visitors, "probably have a vague peripheral awareness of [volunteer contributions] but are not aware of the volume- the simple amount of it. And that's our responsibility is to better share our successes and market what we're doing with the volunteers. And we're working on that here at better ways to have the volunteers identified when they're out in the field, to have signs up that say 'volunteers at work'

²⁶ There can even be waiting lists for volunteer positions

or show what they've been accomplishing in newsletters and magazines. Yeah, I would say that the public probably isn't aware as some of us might like" (Volunteer Coordinator B). The work provided by paid staff and volunteers must be made more distinct if visitors are expected to perceive the difference.

2.3. Hiding the Hurt

In response to chronic under funding, the Association of National Park Rangers claim the National Park Service embraces an approach of "hiding the hurt" (ANPR Report, 4). "The last options chosen are always those that impact park visitors. The perception of visitors from their short visit is not the same as the informed view over time of NPS employees and other professionals engaged daily in resource stewardship. The typical park visitor does not see the effects of patrol and resource program cuts... so the degree of true damage often goes unnoticed and undocumented" (ANPR Report, 4). This approach explains why visitors are not aware of the contributions of volunteers.

As one park superintendent said, "we're smoke screening it a little bit... Even if it's not something you do consciously and you're just trying to make ends meet. Most managers and Park Service employees are so passionate, they expect the best for the visitor and want the best so [they] will go to any ends to make that happen even though you might be showing Congress or others that everything is just fine because you're always doing more with less. So I think we're sometimes our own worst enemy but you also want people to be engaged in what you do and those that are passionate join you in that effort so you can't give that up either" (Superintendent D). This is a struggle in the parks. Dedicated managers want to provide consistently excellent service and where resources are thin, they turn to volunteers.

Superintendent E claims, “we work very hard to not make those cuts obvious to visitors. That’s probably not to our own best interest.” In national park culture it is accepted to hide problems in order to provide the best service to the visitor (Superintendent E). Employees who care deeply about the national parks and their mission want visitors to be happy and satisfied. In effect, this shields visitors from vital information on the health of the parks and short-circuits the democratic feedback process.

2.4. Failed Democracy?

Would the absence of volunteer work actually generate enough citizen action to change the funding commitment to the national parks? There is no definite way to determine this but some superintendents were skeptical. Superintendent B felt, “the majority (of visitors), unless it’s really bad, would just go away disgruntled... So when their Congressmen gives them surveys or they go to a meeting and they’re asked, they may not identify Parks as being that important to them” (Superintendent B). If citizens expect the services being provided by the parks but would not express political frustration in their absence, it would be a failure of our democratic system.

2.5. Short-circuited Democracy Implications

Short-circuited democracy theory shows that a failure in the democratic feedback process can explain prevailing coproduction. In essence, volunteers have formed the filter through which the public understands the state of the parks. Before citizens assess national park health, volunteers fill in the gaps that government has left open. The practice of using volunteers enhances the experience for the visitor, giving them an artificially favorable view of the parks. Thus, the impression citizens acquire of the government’s commitment to the parks is inflated. Consequently, the pressure on politicians to increase Park Service support never materializes.

The American public values the National Park Service and feels it is an important component to the U.S. government. They are also satisfied with the current levels of service the national parks are providing. If citizens want to maintain current services and feel it is the federal government's role to provide them, federal commitment should be increased. If this were to happen, the need for volunteers would decrease and coproduction would subside. In this way, volunteers are not essential to the health of the Park Service and if the feedback loop were fixed, volunteerism would not play such a large role in the parks.

This theory implies that volunteerism is a temporary fix to a problem that the government is capable of fixing. The feedback of individuals to their government truly can have effects on public funding.²⁷ And it is reasonable that, when citizens witness the plight of the parks, they will complain to their representatives and demand change. With this pressure will come more park funding and less reliance on volunteers. If U.S. citizens value their parks as much as they claim to, they should not be shielded from the truth. And if parks are hurting, they should receive help from *everyone*.

3. Conclusions

The reason coproduction has prevailed in the Park Service is a combination of hollow state and short-circuited democracy theory. The VIP program holds an important niche in the National Park Service. There are certain services that the federal government is simply unwilling to provide and some jobs, such as campground hosts, may simply be outside the scope of government. Additionally, volunteer opportunities give citizens the chance to become

²⁷ In his book, Battling for the National Parks, former National Park Director George Hartzog recounts an example of the effective democratic process. One afternoon, then chairmen of the House Appropriations Subcommittee Julia Butler Hanson visited a local Washington D.C. National Park unit only to be turned away at the gates right at 5 PM. She came back, enraged and pressured Director Hartzog to keep the parks open longer. Consequently, she favored the parks with increased funding and operating hours increased (Hartzog 1988: 139-141).

involved in conservation and stewardship in the United States. It is an ultimate form of civic engagement and completes goals of the National Park Service. These constitute the dimensions of hollow state volunteerism. More awareness of these issues would not diminish the role of coproduction because volunteerism fulfills these important roles and removing the volunteers would be harmful to the national parks.

On the other hand, some volunteerism has expanded beyond the hollow state. Volunteers are providing services that the American people feel should be provided by the government, funded by citizen taxes. Furthermore, they may actually *think* this is happening. If visitors attend a national park and do not realize that volunteers are providing services, they have no awareness of the reductions in federal commitment. This is short-circuited democracy volunteerism and more awareness of this issue should cause some uses of volunteers to diminish. Citizens would pressure their representatives and paid staff would replace volunteers in positions that the government is capable of providing. This theory suggests that this volunteerism is not essential to Park Service health and, in fact, may be reducing its strength as a public good.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

This thesis has explained why coproduction has occurred and prevailed in the National Park Service. It is indisputable that volunteers are essential to the function of our modern national parks. However, volunteerism in the parks is relatively understudied and the Park Service presents a complex case of coproductive dynamics. This new study of coproduction offers new insight into national park volunteerism and the field of coproduction itself.

A clear supply and demand for volunteers exists within the Park Service and explains why coproduction has surfaced in the parks. A new, unique matrix of motivations has been developed to explain the extraordinary supply of willing volunteers in the parks. Meanwhile, this thesis has explained that, despite rising appropriations, the Park Service is actually in state of organizational poverty. This drives the agency's demand for added resources. Because the Park Service demands extra resources and there exists a large supply of potential volunteers, coproduction has become prominent in the national parks.

Current literature, however, does not address why coproduction prevails over other responses in public service. This thesis has used two theories to explain why coproduction fills in the responsibility-resource gap in the national parks. First, hollow state theory suggests that the government is incapable or unwilling to provision the services currently provided by volunteers. This implies that volunteerism is essential to the health of the national parks and its important role will remain. Short-circuited democracy theory, on the other hand, suggests that government is capable of providing more service but coproduction short-circuits the democratic feedback process by filling in gaps before visitors assess park health. This theory implies that some volunteerism is not essential to Park Service health and will subside if citizens are made

more aware of the role volunteers play in the parks. It has been concluded that both theories are needed to explain volunteerism in the parks. Either theory could be extrapolated to more general studies of coproduction.

Volunteerism is incredibly important to the national parks and its role is growing. Its presence should be rigorously studied and I hope this thesis will encourage more research and debate about the relationship between volunteers and the Park Service. Additionally, there needs to be more attention given to the role of coproduction in public services. In the end, a careful and thorough discussion of these issues will strengthen the National Park Service that we, especially the volunteers, love so intensely.

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List of Interviews

- Superintendent A: Phone Interview, 12 January 2011
- Superintendent B: Phone Interview, 19 January 2011
- Superintendent C: Phone Interview, 28 January 2011
- Superintendent D: Phone Interview, 8 February 2011
- Superintendent E: Phone Interview, 11 February 2011
- Superintendent F: Phone Interview, 14 February 2011

- Volunteer A: Phone Interview, 21 January 2011
- Volunteer B: Phone Interview, 21 January 2011
- Volunteer C: Phone Interview, 1 March 2011

- Volunteer Coordinator A: Phone Interview, 18 January 2011
- Volunteer Coordinator B: Phone Interview, 15 February 2011
- Chief of Interpretation A: Phone Interview, 18 February 2011

- Dwight Rettie, Author of Our National Park System, Former Chief of National Park Service Policy Development, Phone Interview, 7 February 2011
- Deny Galvin, Former Deputy Director of National Park Service, Phone Interview, 2 February 2011
- Dwight Pitcaithley, Former Chief Historian of National Park Service, Phone Interview, 27 January 2011
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