The Washington Monument stands at the center of the National Mall, and at 555 feet is a towering reminder of George Washington's contributions to this republic.

History & Heroes

NATIONAL MALL AND MEMORIAL PARKS

Few places are more visible or recognizable to the eyes of the world than the National Mall, that stretch of land between the Lincoln Memorial and the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. The American people, as well as visitors from all over the world, have long congregated in this historic and symbolic landscape to reflect on and celebrate the nation's history, as well as to gather in the spirit of democracy and free speech to voice their concerns, hopes and dreams.

National Mall and Memorial Parks encompasses over one thousand acres of land in the heart of Washington, D.C. and is some of the oldest federal park land managed by the National Park Service (NPS). The park welcomes over 25 million visitors each year to our nation's most symbolic and treasured places, including the Washington Monument, the Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson Memorials, the WWII, Korean, and Vietnam War Memorials, and numerous other monuments, memorials, historic sites and cultural landscapes.

BY ROBIN NIXON

Partnerships Pave the Way for the Next Century of Innovation and Conservation

As the National Park Service prepares to celebrate its centennial in 2016, the agency and its many supporters and partners strive to answer the question of how to connect with and create the next generation of visitors, supporters and advocates for parks and other public lands. Our national parks have long been considered "America's Best Idea;" how do we preserve and protect these treasured natural and cultural resources, while at the same time engaging diverse communities and new generations in ways that are relevant to them?

Among the parks of the National Park System, National Mall and Memorial Parks may have more challenges than most in successfully protecting and promoting park resources as we move into our second century. How many public spaces can claim an earthquake, a rainstorm with 70 mph winds, and a public protest with more than a hundred thousand participants all in the same year? The sheer number of structures and sites to preserve, as well as the incredible numbers of visitors to and demonstrators on those sites, put a terrific strain on the resources of the park in terms of wear and tear as well as our ability to provide interesting, interactive and meaningful learning opportunities.

Partnering with organizations and individuals that share our mission and vision for vibrant, relevant and sustainable national parks is one of the most effective strategies for tackling these challenges. National Mall and Memorial Parks partners with over one hundred organizations ranging from small neighborhood groups that plant flowers in nearby triangle parks to large national organizations like the Trust for the National Mall, which brings people together as stewards for restoring and preserving the whole National Mall.

> *To visit our national parks is to witness American values on full display in extraordinary places that embody certain inalienable rights and inspire our nation to succeed. To actively ensure conservation of national parks, public lands, wilderness and historic places for the enjoyment of future generations is a priceless gift for our children.*
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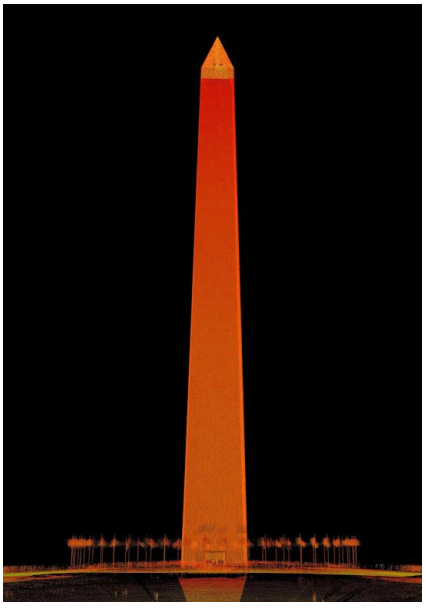
> From ***A Call to Action***: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement, National Park Service 2011.

Additionally, we receive ongoing support from over 6000 people and 150 corporations and local businesses each year through our Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) program. Partner organizations and volunteers raise funds to repair and restore natural and cultural resources, help to plan educational programs and commemorations, and also engage in lots of hands-on support such as helping to clean up from large events like the 4th of July, painting park benches and fences, doing historical interpretation of events and people, and providing support and assistance to millions of visitors. We are always on the lookout for partners that can help us connect more effectively with communities, take care of the park, and create exciting, educational and meaningful visitor experiences.

National Mall and Memorial Parks Partnership with CyArk

Technology has changed dramatically since the birth of the National Park Service in 1916; among the many ambitious goals that the National Park Service hopes to achieve as we move into our next hundred years is the sensible yet innovative utilization of new technological tools and digital strategies. In addition to updating our web sites and social media presence, the park service aims to bring new and innovative technology into the parks for educational purposes as well as protection and conservation. We want to engage new generations of visitors with educational tools and other tech support that enriches their experiences in the parks. For example, National Mall and Memorial Parks has made a mobile app guide to the park available to our visitors, and we have worked with partners like the Trust for the National Mall and the Friends of the National WWII Memorial to develop apps specific to some memorials.

While we are highly engaged in efforts to make the visitor experience more educational and interactive, we are also very interested in applying new technologies to the protection and preservation of the many iconic structures in the park. CyArk approached us in 2012 bringing just such a resource to the table. They were working with a partner, DJS Associates in Philadelphia, to identify laser-scanning projects to which they could donate their services



Scanned 3-D image of the Washington Monument.

and expertise. We had the privilege of hearing from Ben Kacyra, founder of CyArk, about his own and his organization's commitment to preserving the world's cultural heritage, and how that vision includes the National Mall. We were also treated to a nifty demonstration of 3-D digital scanning of the room in which we were meeting, which motivated a very energetic discussion of the technology's potential uses.

Over the next several months, we continued our conversations with CyArk's staff and began to lay out a plan for scanning the major monuments on the National Mall. Every time we spoke, a new idea got put on the table. The close alignment of our organizational missions, as well as a wonderful openness to creative ideas, made for an exciting collaborative process. Documentation of the exterior of the Washington Monument after the earthquake repairs? Absolutely! Hey, how about documenting the memorial stones on the interior, as well? Wow, we could really develop some interesting interpretive activities utilizing those 3-D scans of the Lincoln statue….It wasn't long before we were discussing a five-year plan to create 3-D documentation and educational activities for all of the monuments and memorials on the National Mall.

So where are we in this ambitious plan? With generous in-kind support from DJS Associates, as well as financial resources from Iron Mountain's *Living Legacy Initiative*, we have completed full structural scanning of both the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument. We are organizing data so that it can be effectively used by our facilities and engineering/architectural departments, as well as working with CyArk and our interpretation/education staff to develop ideas for exhibits and educational activities. Perhaps just as important to the process as the scanning itself, we have spent a lot of time with park leadership and staff explaining the process, planning for how to use the products, and assuring people that 3-D scans are, in fact, an entirely practical tool for doing their jobs!

We are moving forward with plans to scan the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, as well as apply for recognition of the National Mall in its entirety as a CyArk 500 site. The CyArk 500, CyArk's global heritage preservation initiative, provides both CyArk and the National Mall and Memorial Parks a foundational structure upon which to expand—and fund—what has so far been a tremendously successful collaboration. We could not be more excited to continue and expand this partnership as we approach the National Park Service centennial in 2016.

Robin Nixon is the Chief of Partnerships at National Mall and Memorial Parks. She joined the National Park Service in 2012.

DYS staff person Jon Adams scanning a memorial stone inside the monument.