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Contact:

Denise.Lopez@deweysquare.com

**FIRST EVER CIVIL RIGHTS, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, CONSERVATION COALITION ANNOUNCES
RECOMMENDED POLICIES TO FOSTER INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO PUBLIC LANDS**

***Group urges President Obama to ensure national parks and other public lands are more welcoming,
representative of all communities***

Washington DC – On the eve of the Centennial of the National Park Service, an unprecedented effort to increase inclusion and representation of America’s communities of color in our national parks and other public lands was announced today by a first-of-its-kind coalition of civil rights, environmental justice, conservation groups and community leaders and activists from across the country. The group has posted on change.org their specific policy recommendations, which they are urging this president and the next to use as a blueprint for the nation’s second century of conservation.

Specifically, the group is asking President Obama to issue a Presidential Memorandum on the Centennial of the National Park Service on August 25, 2016, to encourage federal land management agencies to reflect the demographic and ethnic diversity of our nation’s citizens; respect the historical, cultural and spiritual stories and unique contributions of all Americans; and actively engage all people.

“The face of America is rapidly changing; yet our public lands do not reflect this demographic and ethnic diversity. We have a moral responsibility to fix this disconnect now, for our children, for our grandchildren and for all those that came before us. We must head into the next 100 years with a strong commitment to a more inclusive approach to public lands that puts a priority on engaging all Americans and protecting cultural and natural landscapes that tell our country’s complex history,” said Dr. Carolyn Finney, author, *Black Faces White Spaces*, and coalition participant.

By 2020, half of all youth in America will be of color. The Census Bureau predicts that by 2043, a majority of our country’s residents will be people of color. Yet an [Outdoor Foundation study](#) found that 73 percent of Americans who participated in outdoor activities in 2014 were white. The nation’s changing demographics, coupled with the threats of climate change, increased energy development and partisan attacks on clean air, water and public lands, requires the urgent engagement of all Americans in the use and protection of the nation’s national parks and other public lands.

The coalition’s policy recommendations for a more inclusive system of public lands come on the heels of President Obama’s [23rd national monument designation](#) and a [National Park Week Proclamation](#) committing to helping **all** Americans discover the outdoors and enjoy America’s public lands. Building on the President’s leadership thus far, the coalition’s policy recommendations identify five areas of focus, with immediate and long-term actions identified in each category. These include: 1) Access to public lands, 2) Historical, spiritual, sacred and cultural preservation, 3) Landscape-scale conservation, 4) Stakeholder engagement and, 5) Workforce diversity.

According to a [2014 report by the Center for American Progress](#), of the 460 national parks and monuments, only 112—24 percent—recognize or are dedicated to diverse peoples and cultures.

“President Obama has shown great leadership on parks and public lands, but there is always more progress to be made. We challenge this President and the next one to embrace a vision for the next century of conservation that focuses on the importance of national parks and public lands for all Americans,” said Maite Arce, President/CEO of the Hispanic Access Foundation.

The group has posted its policy document online as part of an official [change.org petition to President Obama](#). A full list of coalition members is also listed there.

“The President should use the Centennial to call for a more inclusive approach to conservation of our public lands that reflects the faces of our country; respects different cultures and takes responsibility for actively engaging all people,” said Mark Masaoka, Policy Director of the Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council.

Locally, four Colorado organizations have been involved in the coalition that has created these policy recommendations: cityWILD, Colorado Latino Leadership Advocacy and Research Organization, Continental Divide Trail Coalition (CLLARO), and Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK).

cityWILD:

Jes Ward, jes@citywild.org, 303-591-9143

“In a state that is both so well-known for its natural spaces, and is also rapidly changing and developing, addressing issues of inclusion is incredibly important,” said Jes Ward, Executive Director of cityWILD. “the outdoors should set the example as a place that is truly accessible to all regardless of race or socio-economic status. cityWILD is excited to be part of this coalition and we hope that Colorado will step up to lead the way in the vision for accessible public lands for all.”

Colorado Latino Leadership, Advocacy and Research Organization (CLLARO):

Christine Alonzo, christine.alonzo@cllaro.org, 303-722-5150

"The newest generation of Latinos is growing up in a very different world. With more and more people living in urban areas, time spent in nature is rare. It's causing our children to lose sight of our rich, cultural heritage and it's also impacting their health. This is why CLLARO is proud to be part of the Centennial Initiative. We also encourage the Obama Administration to adopt the guiding priorities set forth by this coalition."

Continental Divide Trail Coalition:

Teresa Martinez, tmartinez@continentaldivide-trail.org, 540-449-4506

"In 1968, the National Trail System was created by Congress to maximize the outdoor recreation possibilities for all Americans. These National Scenic and Historic trails traverse wilderness, rural, suburban and urban areas in 49 states connecting with every distinct ecological area or biome in the US. They protect crucial conservation areas and provide wildlife migration corridors, as well as education, recreation, & fitness for people of all ages. As a representative of the entire National Trails Community, the Continental Divide Trail Coalition is proud to be part of the broad coalition of organizations and individuals urging the Obama Administration and all of us, to take critical steps toward an inclusive system of national parks and other public lands, like our National Trails System, that reflects, honors and engages all Americans today, and for future generations." – Teresa Martinez, Executive Director, Continental Divide Trail Coalition

Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK):

Loretta Pineda, lpineda@elkkids.org, 303-257-2501

“For the past 20 years ELK has opened new doors of opportunity by engaging urban youth and families in Colorado’s outdoors”, said Loretta Pineda, Executive Director of Environmental Learning for Kids. “Environmental Learning for Kids is proud to be a part of a coalition of diverse organizations taking action to protect and make our public lands inclusive and accessible to all and to work towards a diverse workforce in the management of our public lands.”

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