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After Public Outcry, Department of the Interior Expected to Continue Program for Kids in National Parks

Washington, D.C.— Today, the Department of the Interior is expected to announce that despite news reports that the program was in danger of being cancelled, it will continue the popular, successful Every Kid in a Park program. Every Kid in a Park allows every fourth grader in the U.S. to visit their national parks. Since the program began, millions of fourth graders have downloaded their park pass voucher and visited a national park, many for the first time. The Outdoors Alliance for Kids delivered over 15,000 comments in support of the program to Secretary Ryan Zinke, including 1,000 handwritten postcards from children. More than 70 member organizations and allies to the Outdoors Alliance for Kids also [called on Secretary Zinke](#) to continue the Every Kid in a Park program in a letter sent this week.

“Thank you to the dozens of organizations who acted to protect Every Kid in a Park, and to the tens of thousands of people across the country who voiced their support, including over one thousand kids who signed postcards about the value of the program,” said **Jackie Ostfeld, Director of Sierra Club Outdoors and Chair of the Outdoors Alliance for Kids**. “Today’s decision is a victory for kids across the U.S. The Every Kid in a Park program is a low-cost and popular public-private partnership that helps boost local economies while improving children’s health and connections to nature. Millions in private funding have been leveraged to support transportation costs for children from low-income schools across the United States. Ending this program would have been a big mistake, and we’re glad to see that the Department of Interior will continue to support Every Kid in a Park.”

“Summer is the time to savor the great outdoors and there’s no better place to do that than our national parks. In its almost three years of existence, Every Kid in a Park has opened the door to the natural beauty of the nation’s parks for countless children, helping them stay physically active and healthy,” said **American Heart Association CEO Nancy Brown**. “We are pleased that the Department of the Interior will continue the admirable work of this wonderful public-private partnership, and urge Congress to pass legislation to make the program permanent.”

“The Children & Nature Network supports efforts to ensure that all children have access to America’s public lands and outdoor heritage. Every Kid in a Park is one such initiative, and we are thrilled that it will be continued so that children and families can experience the natural places we cherish as a country.” – **Sarah Milligan-Toffler, Executive Director, Children & Nature Network**

“We are very glad that the popular Every Kid in a Park program will be extended to provide a new class of 4th graders the opportunity to visit our national parks. The experiences the kids have—many for the first time ever—are priceless, helping expand their horizons and connect them with our nation’s natural and cultural heritage. The Every Kid program would not have been extended without public pressure. When the Administration has proposed actions like massive entrance fee increases that would limit access to our parks, Americans have spoken

up, demonstrating that ensuring the opportunity for everyone to access our national parks is an important American value. Now let's work together to make the program permanent and guarantee that not only this year's 4th grade class, but all 4th graders will have the same opportunity to experience America's national parks as a rite of passage." —**Paul Sanford, National Director of Recreation Policy, The Wilderness Society**

"Children's access to parks is essential to building the next generation of environmental stewards," said **Barbara Tulipane, CAE, National Recreation and Park Association president and CEO**. "NRPA applauds the administration's decision to extend the Every Kid in a Park program, as it teaches children the importance of connecting with nature and protecting our nation's parks."

"The Alliance for Childhood supports children's healthy development, love of learning and joy in living, especially through child-initiated, outdoor play in nature. The Every Kid in a Park program provides equitable opportunities for fourth graders to experience active play in our natural world. Continuing this program will support life changing developmental opportunities for the children who need it most. Together with our OAK partners, we are committed to ensuring the success of this incredibly impactful model program. With bipartisan support, we look forward to working with members of Congress to pass the Every Kid Outdoors Act to ensure the future of the Every Kid in a Park program," said **Linda Rhoads, Executive Director, Alliance for Childhood**.

"Of all the programs we've had to defend under this administration, never did we think Every Kid in a Park would be one of them. Thanks to the voices of millions of Americans represented by OAK organizations, we are relieved the program will continue to get more fourth graders and their families into America's national parks. These visits help support businesses in gateway communities and families share invaluable park experiences that will last a lifetime." —**Theresa Pierno, President & CEO, National Parks Conservation Association**

"On behalf of the thousands of under-served fourth graders across the country that we support each year, we are delighted that Secretary Zinke and the Department of the Interior will continue this program for a fourth year. Our students, families and teachers have often shared with us the immeasurable value and importance of this program that provides free access to all of our national parks. These students are our future outdoor enthusiasts and stewards of our public lands and waters," stated **Grace Lee, Executive Director, National Park Trust**

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About the Outdoors Alliance for Kids (OAK): OAK is a national strategic partnership of organizations from diverse sectors with a common interest in connecting children, youth and families with the outdoors. The members of OAK are brought together by the belief that the wellness of current and future generations, the health of our planet and communities and the economy of the future depend on humans having a personal, direct and life-long relationship with nature and the outdoors. OAK brings together nearly 100 businesses and organizations, representing more than 60 million individuals to address the growing divide between children, youth and the natural world. For more information: www.outdoorsallianceforkids.org