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To Whom It May Concern:

For 18 years I have owned a gallery and home in Big Cypress National Preserve surrounded by over a million acres of the Everglades ecosystem. When my son was killed by a drunk driver it was to the wilderness that I fled to regain my serenity and equilibrium. Wilderness is a spiritual necessity and for that reason I feel compelled to give my opinion here today.

In 2005 I began a project of photographing America for a museum exhibit at Williams & Mary College in Virginia. "America the Beautiful" is now a traveling exhibit. From that exhibit the Friends of Acadia National Park created "America's National Parks", which is also a traveling exhibit. These two exhibits, along with Ken Burn's film on the National Parks, has generated a new interest in our Park system. It is exciting. I'm sure I can say for both Ken and I, that it is our desire to keep our Parks healthy and strong. I believe we have achieved success by making people aware of the beauty and the unique history of our country to have saved those important wilderness areas for future generations.

The most important way to encourage people to visit our National Parks is through advertising. Advertisements need to capture the essence of the park. It has been my experience that when imagery evokes beauty and adventure, people will fall in love with the park and want to experience it for themselves.

Therefore the advertising needs to be done by someone who knows and understands the ecosystem of the park they are advertising. Giving the job to the lowest bidder rarely achieves that kind of success. Often the lowest bidder lives in some other state and has no idea what the 'real' park is about. So, in order to get high quality imagery to entice visitors, a budget needs to be created that can lure good advertisement agencies to apply.

When choosing a company for the job, a panel from the park that the ad will be about should look at the work of the agency to see if it feels 'right' for their purpose. The Superintendent should be totally involved in this process. The 'ok' for the job should not come from outside his/her park. It should come from the Superintendent of the park,

I believe this process should be started using just a few parks to see what the response will be. It would be better to spend a greater amount of money on the ads for just a few parks, rather than 'bare bones' for many. The quality of advertising would be better and therefore the response better. When the results are in, then a larger advertising effort can be created.

National Parks that are 'unknown' are also underfunded. If the ads succeed (and I believe they will), then in order for the experience of the visitor to be a good, the park will need to be funded appropriately. The object is for the visitor to share their fun stories with friends, who will then also want to visit the park. We don't want them to have a bad experience in the park. Because the ads will be bringing more than the normal amount of people to the park there will be a need for more people on the park staff in order to deal with the increased number of people in the park.

We all talk about bringing peace to the world. I can think of no better way to encourage peace than to encourage people from all over the world to enjoy the spiritual sanctuary of our National Parks.

Clyde Butcher