



Office of International Affairs

2015 Business Plan



Produced by
National Park Service
Business Management Group
Office of the Chief Financial Officer

U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, DC

Spring 2015

National Park Business Plan Process

Business planning is an essential part of national park unit and program management. The business planning process is undertaken to help national parks and organizations manage their financial and operational resources more effectively and strategically.

This report articulates the financial and operational status of the National Park Service Office of International Affairs (OIA). Written and conducted in spring 2015 by the Business Management Group, this plan documents the purpose and breadth of responsibilities undertaken by the Office of International Affairs. It discusses how the Office's resources are allocated, and discusses future budgetary situations and potential opportunities to increase overall effectiveness and financial sustainability in the long term.

National Park Service Mission

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and intrinsic values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The National Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.



Old Faithful erupts in the world's first national park and UNESCO World Heritage site, Yellowstone National Park.

Cover: A technical assistance team gathers for a photo in Kaieteur National Park, Guyana. The NPS is working with Guyana on a comprehensive review of its parks' operations.

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Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument , a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, is located on the U.S./Mexico border and is a Sister Park to Mexico's Alto Goyo de California y Delta de Rio Colorado, and El Pinacate y Gran Desierto de Altar. All parks work to manage land in the Sonoran Desert.

In 1961, Interior Secretary Steward Udall established the National Park Service Office of International Affairs (OIA), the first program in the history of the U.S. government specifically dedicated to global conservation and heritage preservation matters. In the five decades since, OIA helped the NPS become one of the key leaders in the global parks and heritage movements. Many of the most important international conservation/preservation achievements of the late 20th century had connections to OIA, from the UNESCO World Heritage Convention to the World Parks Congress. The NPS has now worked in nearly every country on earth, and many consider the national parks – “America’s Best Idea” – one of our country’s most important exports. This is a legacy of which the NPS and the American people should be immensely proud.

However, after many years of flat or declining budgets for OIA, NPS’s ability to engage internationally is much more limited now than it was even a decade ago, and addressing future fiscal challenges will demand increased creativity and support from partners of the NPS’s international mission from within and outside the Service.

Thank you taking the time to review the 2015 Business Plan for the Office of International Affairs. This plan lays out the many ways in which our office helps the National Park Service achieve its mission of engaging with the world, and in turn keeping our programs at pace with state-of-the-art global conservation theory and practice, to the benefit of U.S. parks and the resources they protect. This business plan shines a light not only on the breadth of our current efforts but also on the serious limitations we face, given severe funding constraints.

In our increasingly globalized and interconnected world, where it is recognized that problems such as climate change, air pollution, biodiversity loss and others will only be successfully addressed by reaching beyond national borders, the role of international partnerships as promoted by the Office of International Affairs becomes all the more important. It is worth stressing that international engagement is part of the NPS’s mission; this is not just a “niche” activity within the Service. As such, the entire Service has a stake in the ability of OIA to facilitate and promote cooperation with partners around the world. With the 2016 NPS Centennial fast approaching, we hope this document and the process used to develop it will help all of us concerned with maintaining a robust presence for the National Park Service on the world stage find a path to a sustainable future for this critically important office and the functions it carries out—they are truly a legacy worth preserving and strengthening for the future.

I want to thank the NPS Business Management group, the many hundreds of individuals who contributed useful feedback to our OIA survey, and OIA staff members for developing this very useful plan. We welcome your recommendations, feedback and assistance as we continue to promote NPS’s international mission.



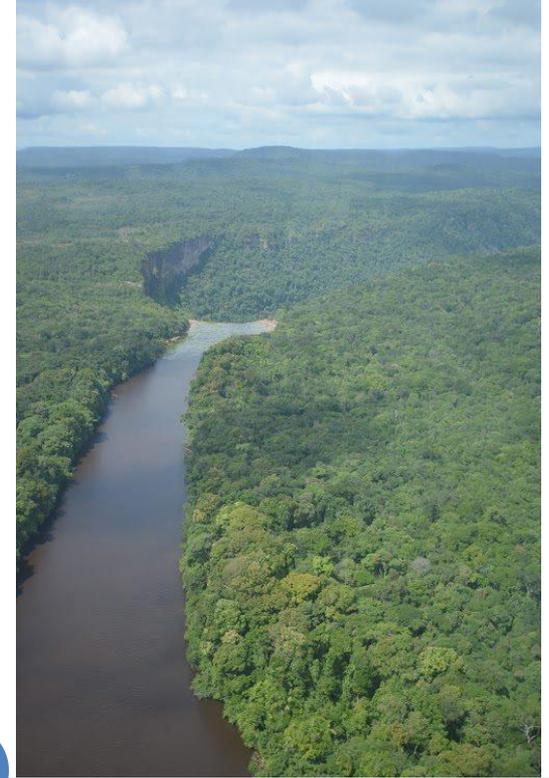
Stephen Morris
Chief, OIA



Key Themes

The following key themes emerged during the business planning process for the Office of International Affairs. Some are driven by the inherent nature of international work – broad dynamic programming needs and wide geographic reach. Others reflect deliberate policy decisions – complex processes and constrained budgets. These themes will be discussed in more detail throughout the pages that follow.

Kaieteur National Park, Guyana, where the NPS is engaged in a technical assistance project reviewing park management.



1

Significant Program Breadth

With just 6.5 full-time employees and an appropriated budget under \$1M, the NPS Office of International Affairs (OIA) manages a substantial portfolio of international programs and work streams. These include serving as the primary coordinator for all World Heritage programming in the U.S., developing and facilitating sister park relationships, shepherding every NPS international travel request through a formal approval process, hosting international delegations, and providing hands-on technical assistance to parks and nature preserves in foreign countries. Stakeholders comment that there is “a lot going on for a very limited number of staff.” Staff members are predominately generalists and support multiple programs.

2

Financial Challenges

In recent years, the OIA has experienced severe difficulties funding its operations within the limits of its annual appropriated budget from Congress. This primarily results from a stagnant budget and increased personnel costs. Given the professional skill requirements needed to execute many of the office’s programs, OIA staff tend to be higher-graded than employees at the typical NPS unit. Additionally, the OIA sees little staff turnover, which simultaneously contributes to strong institutional knowledge and cohesive relationships with partners and stakeholders, but leaves little opportunity for the office to utilize natural attrition to make workforce adjustments in the face of budget constraints.



3

Complex Processes

International work requires adherence to fairly intensive processes. Both the international travel approval process for NPS staff and World Heritage Site nominating, selecting, and reporting require significant and time-intensive involvement from OIA staff to complete. Similarly, information requests, policy coordination, and supporting international delegations – while all directly supporting OIA’s mission – are typically at the request of third parties and can be unpredictable. Given the nature of the OIA’s work and capacity, the office often finds itself operating more reactively than strategically.

4

Wide Programmatic Reach and Geographic Scale

The scale and scope of world-wide issues and the geographic, cultural, and logistical barriers faced with international cooperation create unique challenges for the OIA in achieving its mission. Despite the relatively small size of its staff, the OIA works extensively across the globe. The office has formal programming or partnerships on every continent (with the exception of Antarctica), and has directly worked with over 150 countries in the past five years alone.

The U.S. delegation to the World Parks Congress in Sydney, Australia

Mission and Purpose

The National Park Service's mission statement includes an international component to, "extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world." Considered by some to be "America's Best Idea," the NPS has inspired the creation of thousands of national parks and preserves across the globe, as well as governmental bodies to manage these special places. Working internationally allows the United States to share its expertise and knowledge in land management to other countries, while also providing the opportunity to learn about innovative practices and unique challenges faced by other park agencies. Similarly, many conservation and resource management issues extend beyond a single geographic boundary. Climate change, species migration, and air and water pollution, to name just a few, can all be more effectively addressed with a collaborative, multinational approach.

The National Park Service International Program promotes and facilitates collaboration in preserving and understanding natural and cultural heritage throughout the world.

OIA Mission Statement

The NPS Office of International Affairs was created in November 1961 to facilitate cooperation and partnership between the NPS and analogous land management agencies throughout the world. The OIA, which sits under the NPS Washington Support Office, serves as the primary contact and focal point for all international activities,* allowing the NPS to execute a coordinated approach to international programming and relationships. Through the OIA, the National Park Service seeks to achieve the following:

- Support the NPS mission of natural and cultural resource stewardship and visitor services, which is both domestic and global in nature;
- Continue to provide a source of inspiration for the "national park idea" globally;
- Enhance cooperation with partners outside U.S. borders to effectively manage challenges that cross international borders and may impact the future health of America's national parks;
- Strengthen international cooperation in the management of park natural resources, such as those that cross or are in close proximity to U.S. borderlands;
- Strengthen international cooperation in the management of park cultural resources, such as those that require international perspective for accurate and effective interpretation;
- Learn best practices, new ideas, and approaches to park and cultural heritage management from international counterparts;
- Provide training and learning opportunities and meaningful experiences for National Park Service employees; and
- Meet mandates from the Executive Legislative branches and international treaty obligations.

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*There are other significant programs within the NPS worth focused on specific relationships – the Southwest Border Resource Protection Program (FY14 \$751K) and the Beringia Shared Heritage Program (FY14 \$648K).

As the primary NPS body responsible for international-related programs and relationships, the OIA manages a large scope of work. Its areas of work vary broadly and can be summarized in the following categories:

- World Heritage Program
- International Volunteer-In-Parks Program
- International Travel Coordination
- Technical Assistance and Exchange
- Information Request and Policy Coordination
- Global and Regional Initiatives and Partnership Development
- Sister Park Coordination
- International Delegation Coordination

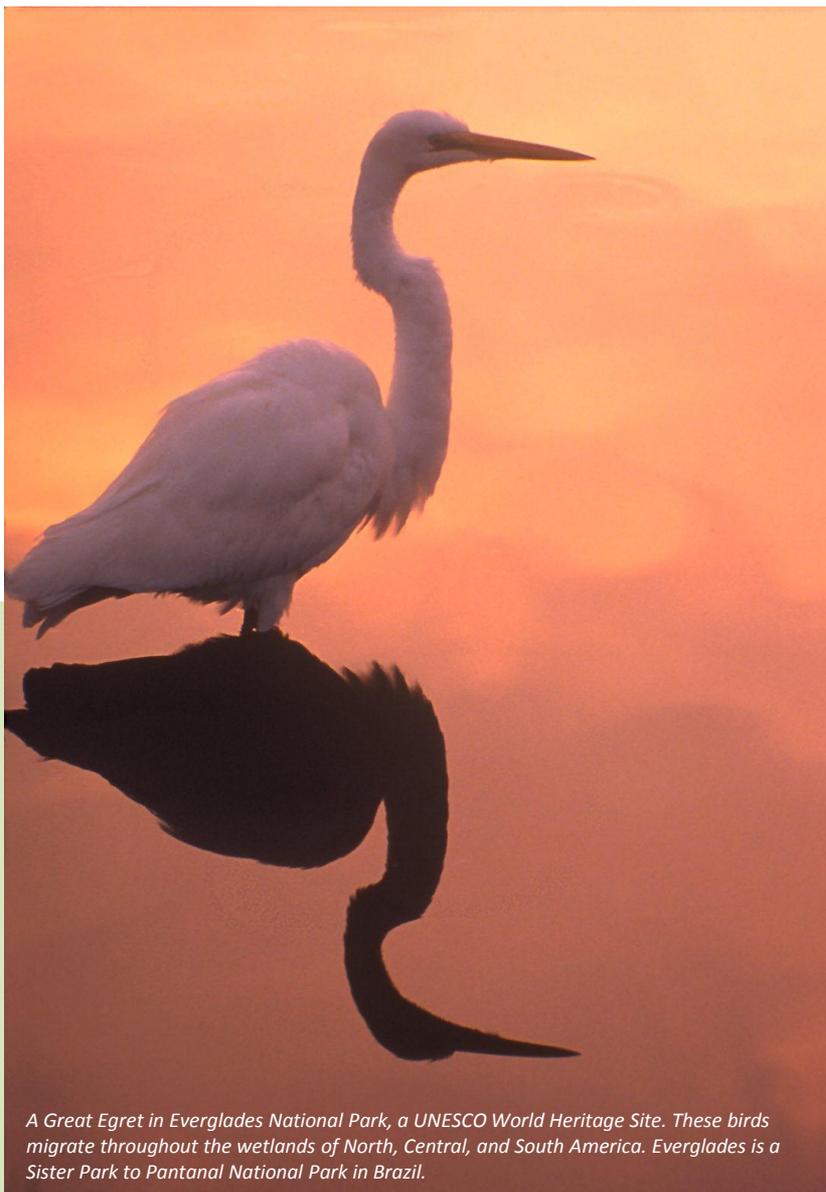
These work streams are discussed in the pages that follow.

The delegated authority for the National Park Service to administer a program of international affairs stems from several federal laws, conventions, and treaties that provide either general authority to federal agencies or specific authority to the Secretary of the Interior. The Secretary in turn delegates authority to the Director of the NPS.* These laws include:

- The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961
- The Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961
- The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
- The National Historic Preservation Act
- The Endangered Species Act of 1973
- The International Environment Protection Act of 1983

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*See the Director's Order on International Activities (DO #56) for more information.



A Great Egret in Everglades National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. These birds migrate throughout the wetlands of North, Central, and South America. Everglades is a Sister Park to Pantanal National Park in Brazil.

Funding and Operations

In FY14, the Office of International Affairs managed a budget of \$1,089,050. The OIA primarily relies on base funds derived from the National Recreation and Preservation (NR&P) appropriation to manage its operations. The office also receives limited reimbursable funds from partner organizations to cover project-specific work. In FY14, NR&P expenditures amounted to \$895,278 and expenditures paid from reimbursements equaled \$193,772. The vast majority of the office's expenditures – 97% in FY14 – pay for staff salaries and benefits, with the remaining costs tied to travel, transportation, supplies, and equipment.

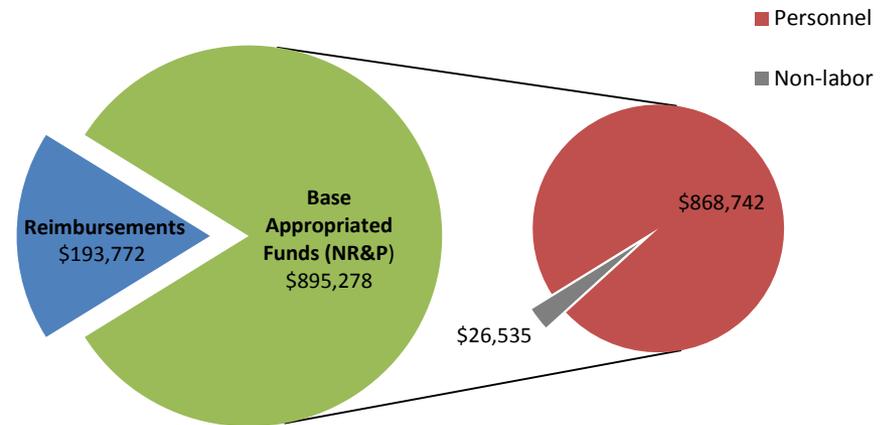
Even while the OIA budget has remained largely flat over the past 14 years (averaging a cut of 4% over that time), its adjusted budget has experienced a 30% loss in buying power. Inflation coupled with mandatory step increases for staff has led to a severely constrained budget environment for the office.

As of FY15, the OIA staffs 6.5 full-time equivalents (FTE).* The OIA Chief, five permanent full-time International Cooperation Specialists, and one part-time (at 50%) permanent Historian from the Midwest Region execute all the office's many programs and work streams. While OIA staff members are organized around geographic regions and oversee specific programs, much coordination and collective effort is required to achieve desired outcomes.

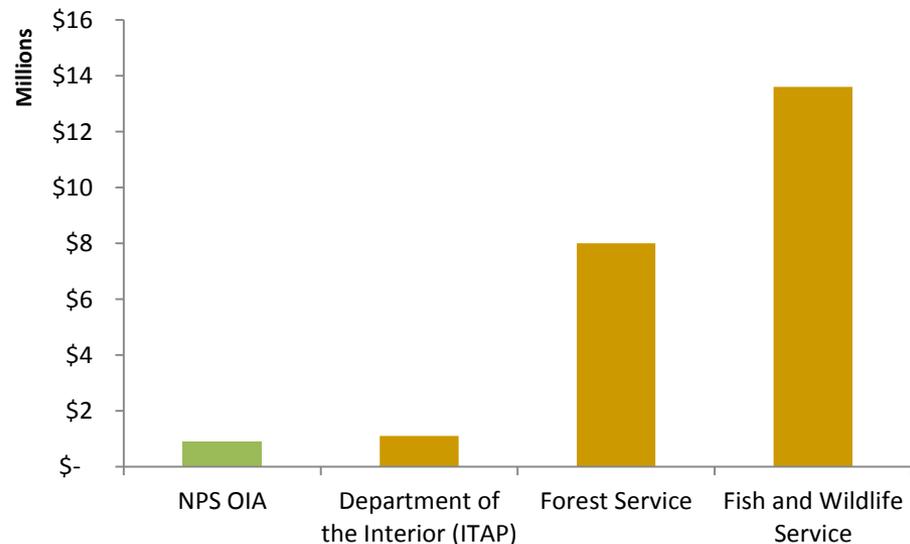
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*This is down from over 20 FTE in the early 1990s.

In FY14, 97% of the office budget was devoted to labor costs alone.

OIA Expenditures (FY14)

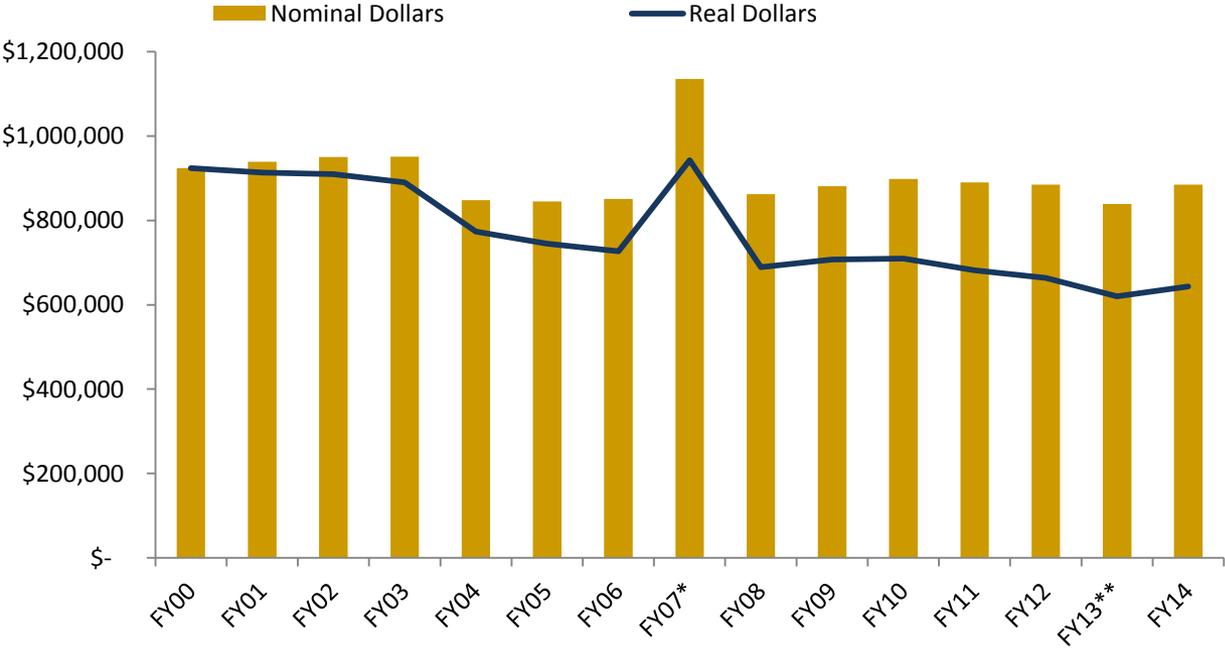


Budget Comparisons of International Offices (FY14)





Appropriated Budget Funding (FY00-FY14)



* Includes \$300,000 mid-year reprogramming at DOI request for US-Mexico Sister Park projects.

** Accounts for a 5% cut due to government budget sequestration

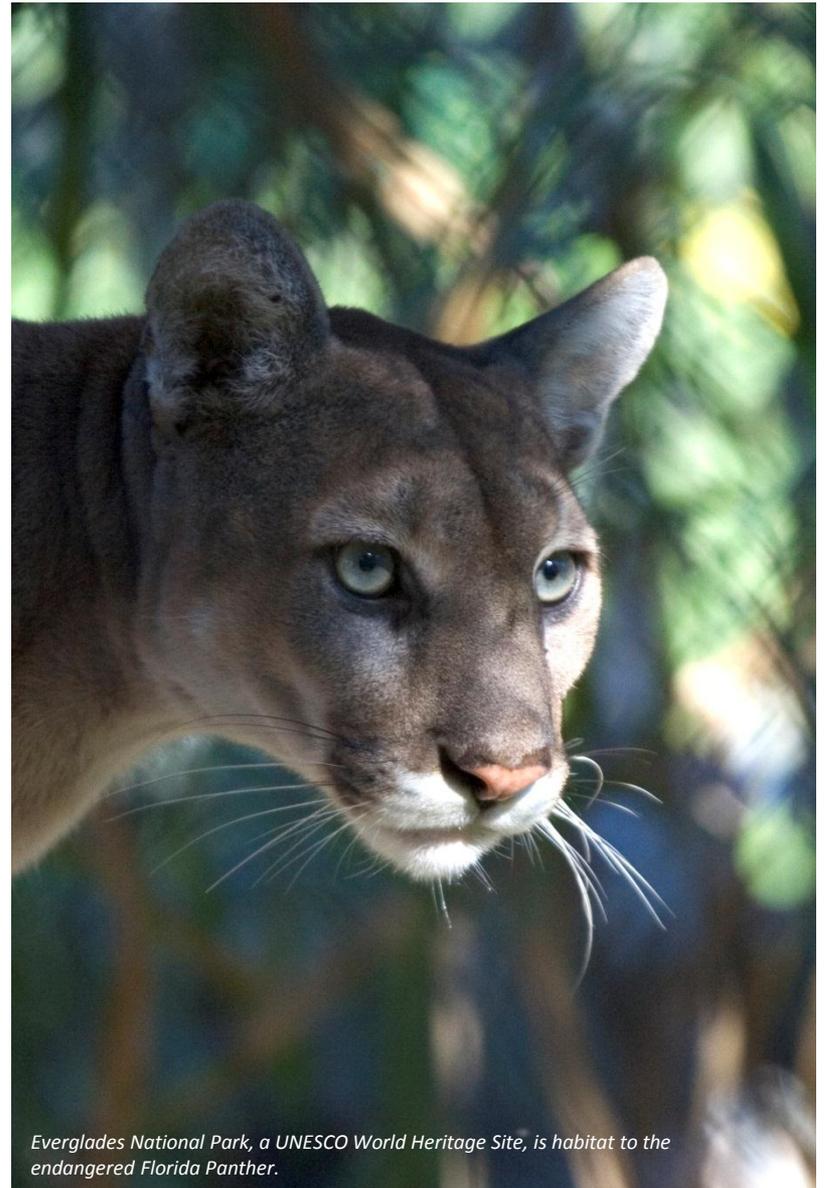
The OIA's adjusted budget has experienced a 30% loss in buying power over the past 14 years.

Programs and Responsibilities

The Office of International Affairs is part of the Office of the Director of the National Park Service in Washington, DC. OIA personnel advise and represent the Director on international issues and keep NPS leadership informed about pertinent international activities and conservation-related developments. The OIA is the primary contact for other bureaus and agencies, foreign governments, and international and private organizations on related matters. It manages, or assists in the management of:

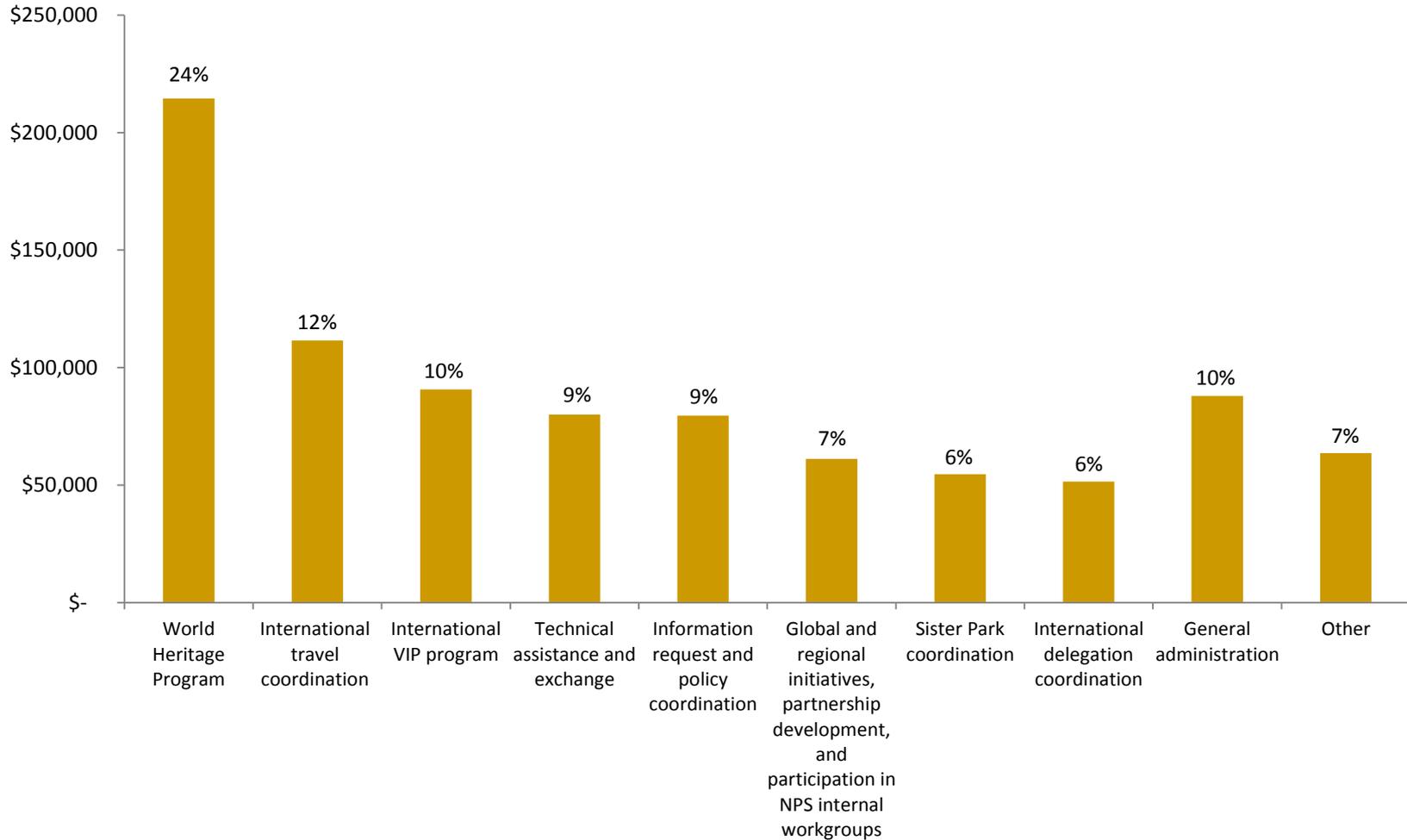
- U.S. implementation of and support for the World Heritage Convention,
- International technical assistance projects,
- Visits of international delegations to the NPS,
- The International Volunteers-In-Parks (IVIP) Program,
- Coordination of Sister Park partnerships,
- International travel review for NPS employees,
- Involvement in international initiatives, and
- International partnership development.

To better understand the resources allocated to such a broad portfolio of programs, OIA staff were asked to estimate the percent of time they dedicated to the office's differing work streams. These staff time estimates were then converted to approximations of financial cost according to the respondents' salary and benefits. Given how difficult it is to estimate the amount of time one dedicates to a work stream over the course of a year, these figures of cost should be reviewed as what they are – estimations. However, these figures are helpful in better understanding the competing priorities of the OIA as it advances its mission. The chart on the opposite page presents these estimates.



Everglades National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is habitat to the endangered Florida Panther.

Estimated OIA Expenditures by Programmatic Area (FY14)



World Heritage Program

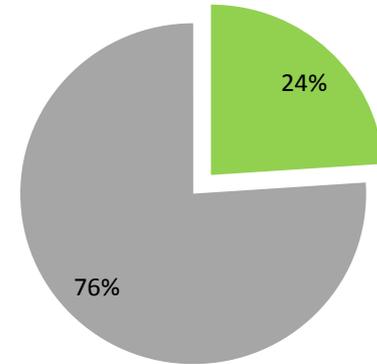
To help meet U.S. treaty obligations and requirements of Section 401 of the 1980 Amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act, the OIA provides staff support to the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks on actions associated with the World Heritage Convention. Most World Heritage Sites in the U.S. are administered by the NPS. The OIA coordinates the development of U.S. World Heritage nominations under Convention protocols. The OIA also coordinates NPS technical assistance to World Heritage sites around the world, including through its World Heritage Fellowships program.

Placement on the World Heritage List imparts international recognition, but does not alter a park's purpose, change its management requirements, or reduce NPS jurisdiction. However, the World Heritage Committee closely monitors developments that may affect designated sites. Additionally, the World Heritage Convention requires regular periodic reporting on the conditions at World Heritage properties. The OIA plays a leading role in responding to issues the Committee may raise and in meeting reporting requirements.

“...deterioration or disappearance of any item of cultural or natural heritage constitutes a harmful impoverishment of heritage of all the nations of the world”

World Heritage Convention

World Heritage Program
(estimate % of total OIA expenditures)



One hundred and ninety-one countries have ratified the World Heritage Convention.



World Heritage Program

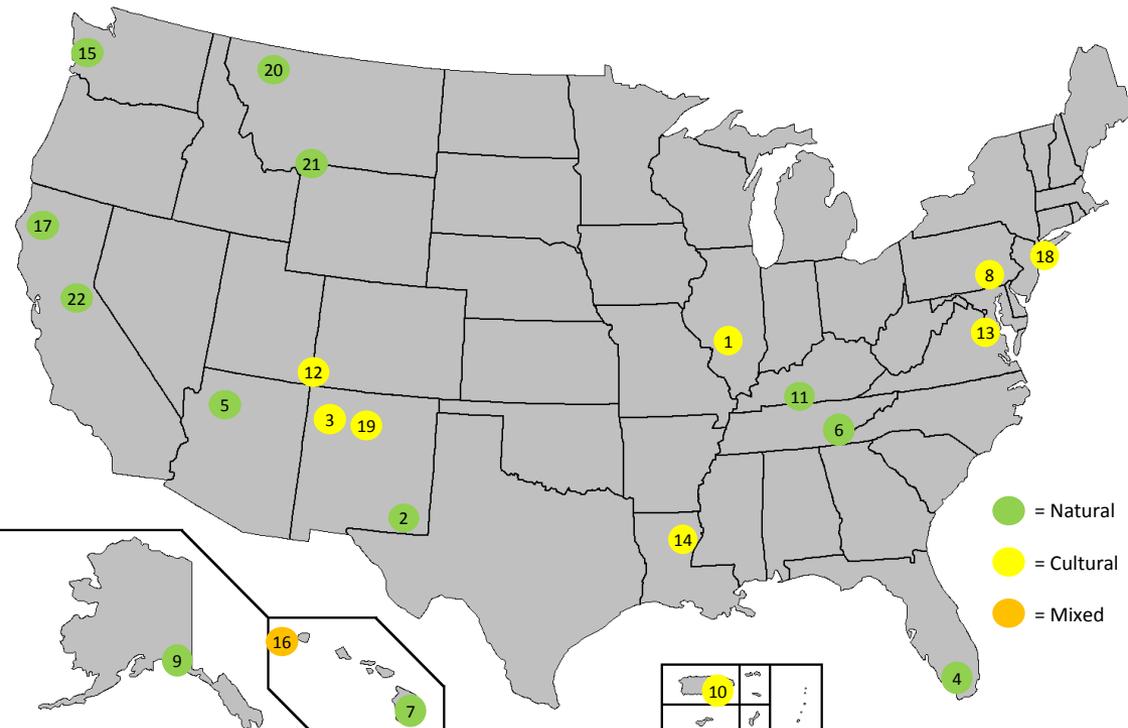


Left: OIA Chief Steve Morris kicks-off an event with Russell Train, the “father” of the World Heritage Program.
Center: A delegation from China visits Yosemite National Park to study interpretive techniques at a World Heritage Site.
Right: A delegation from Cambodia and Thailand visits Great Smoky Mountains National Park – a World Heritage Site.

World Heritage Sites in the United States

1. Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site
2. Carlsbad Caverns National Park
3. Chaco Culture National Historical Park
4. Everglades National Park
5. Grand Canyon National Park
6. Great Smoky Mountains National Park
7. Hawaii Volcanoes National Park
8. Independence Hall
9. Kluane / Wrangell-St. Elias / Glacier Bay / Tatshenshini-Alsek*
10. La Fortaleza and San Juan National Historic Site
11. Mammoth Cave National Park
12. Mesa Verde National Park
13. Monticello and the University of Virginia
14. Monumental Earthworks of Poverty Point
15. Olympic National Park
16. Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument
17. Redwood National and State Parks
18. Statue of Liberty
19. Pueblo de Taos
20. Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park*
21. Yellowstone National Park
22. Yosemite National Park

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* Joint U.S.-Canadian World Heritage Site



World Heritage Program: Nomination of San Antonio Missions

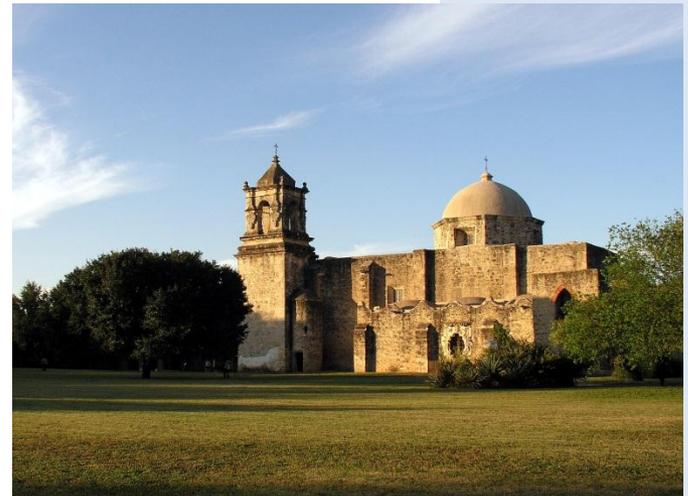
In December 2013, the United States submitted to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre a 350-page document nominating the San Antonio Missions (San Antonio Missions National Historical Park and the Alamo) as a World Heritage Site. This nomination was the result of four years of intensive collaborative work between the park, multiple governmental and private partners, and the NPS OIA. The extensive effort and time required to produce a nomination document is typical and the role played by OIA is essential to ensure a positive outcome.

During this time, OIA staff guided the park and its partners through the complex and technical requirements of the World Heritage program. They visited the San Antonio Missions several times, held monthly meetings with the local partners on how to approach and organize the nomination effort, recommended and made contact with international experts to provide advice, participated in expert workshops, reviewed and edited several drafts of the nomination document, and organized the review of the document by the Department of the Interior and the Federal Interagency Panel for World Heritage. After the nomination was submitted, the OIA Historian participated in the evaluation of the nomination by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), and organized and edited responses to ICOMOS's questions. ICOMOS ultimately made a favorable recommendation for the San Antonio Missions to receive World Heritage status – paving the way for the nomination's consideration by the World Heritage Committee at its 2015 session in Bonn, Germany.

Based on its many years of active engagement with the World Heritage program including serving as the U.S. delegation's leading technical advisors during U.S. terms on the World Heritage Committee, the OIA has developed significant expertise in the World Heritage process and the practices of the Committee. It brings this expertise to bear when advising and providing oversight to the nomination of U.S. sites.



World Heritage designation of the San Antonio Missions would come after nearly a decade of dedicated organizing.



The San Antonio Missions are a link to early life on the Spanish frontier in North America.

World Heritage Program: Nomination of San Antonio Missions



The beautifully preserved Mission San José is one of five missions constituting the World Heritage nomination.

Engaging a Global Audience

People may wonder if there are any real benefits of designation as a World Heritage site, beyond the prestige of being named as one of the globe's most significant cultural or natural treasures. There are several instances in which U.S. sites received additional protection as a result of their World Heritage status. In 2009-10, for example, a proposed energy development in British Columbia's Flathead River valley - which could have had significant negative impacts on Glacier National Park, part of the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, a joint Canada-U.S. World Heritage site - was canceled following an examination of the issue by the World Heritage Committee. It was the site's World Heritage designation which brought global attention to this remote corner of North America and ultimately led to an U.S.-Canada agreement to protect the Flathead River valley. Similarly, at New Mexico's Taos Pueblo, a World Heritage site recognized for its living culture, tribal authorities leveraged their World Heritage designation to minimize impacts of overflights from a newly expanded municipal airport through negotiations with the Federal Aviation Administration.

International Travel Coordination

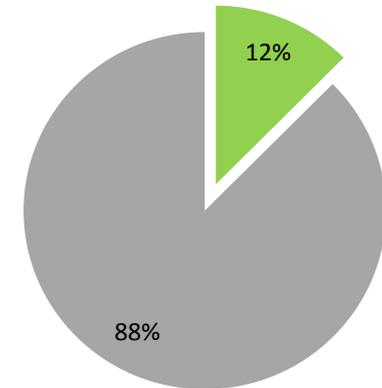
The OIA serves as the coordinating body for all NPS international travel approvals* working directly with regions and the NPS Deputy Director to shepherd travel requests through the approval process. The NPS conducts a variety of international activities and follows basic guidelines in selecting and conducting them. International activities should assist in the protection of natural or cultural resources managed by the NPS or by its partners. International activities should enhance the ability of NPS employees to address challenges faced in accomplishing the NPS mission through professional growth, experience gained, or both. The activity must also benefit the NPS or help meet U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Over 80% of the cost of international travel is paid for by other organizations, bringing in a value of over \$350,000 annually to the NPS.

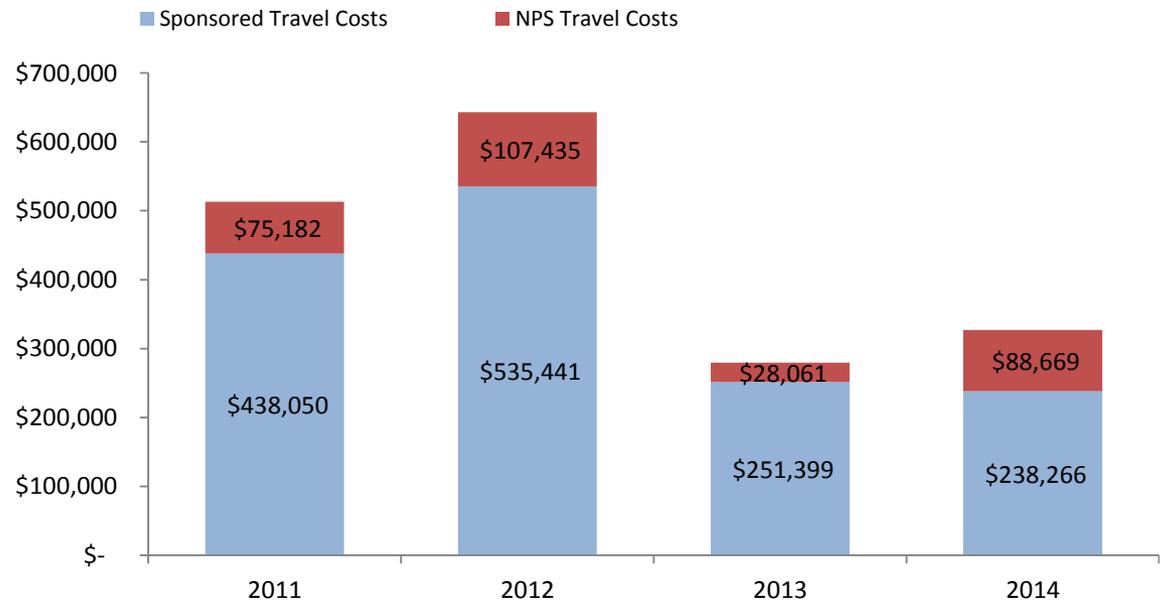
International travel by the NPS is predominately sponsored travel. On average, over 80% of the cost of international travel is paid for by other organizations. Sponsored travel brings a value of over \$350,000 annually to the NPS. Travel costs average about \$4,300 per trip – at a cost to NPS of only about \$700 a trip.

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*This excludes travel to Canada

International Travel Coordination
(estimate % of total OIA expenditures)



International Travel Costs (FY11-FY14)**



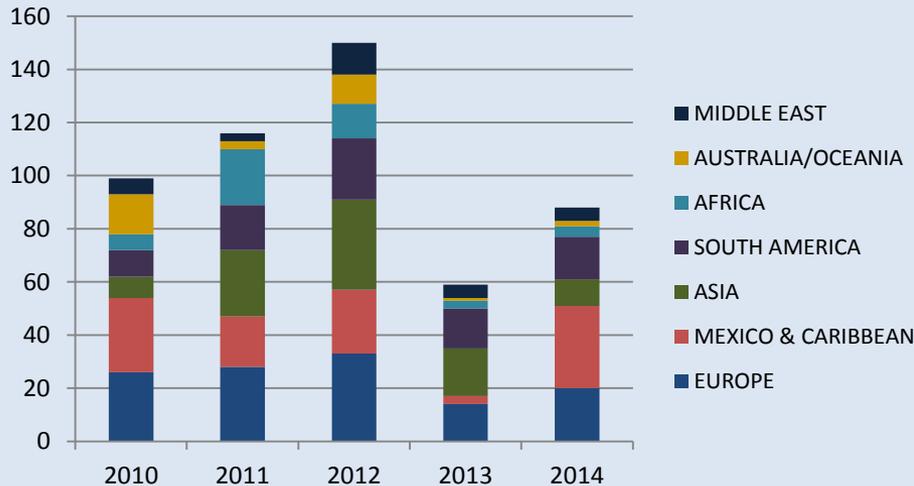
**Costs are derived from travel authorization estimates and not from actual voucher expenditures.

Europe has been a fairly consistent exchange destination for NPS employees, averaging about 24 approvals annually, and consuming over 20% of all travel approvals for the past five years. Travel to Mexico and the Caribbean has also been relatively stable, averaging 21 approvals annually, and consuming approximately 20% of travel approvals over the same time frame. Travel to Africa, Australia/Oceania, and the Middle East collectively make up just about 20% of travel. Travel to these regions are highly variable year to year.

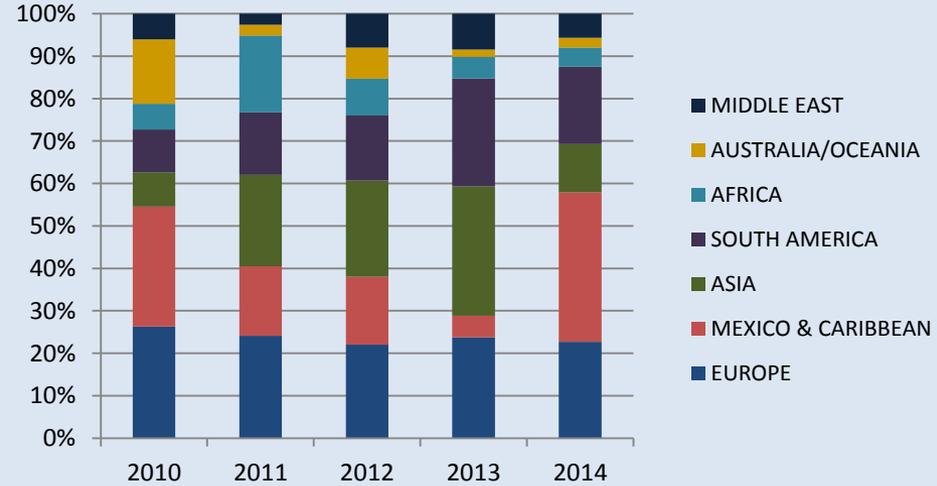


Managing habitat for migratory wildlife ranging across international boundaries requires international coordination.

Number of Travel Approvals by Geographic Region (FY10-FY14)

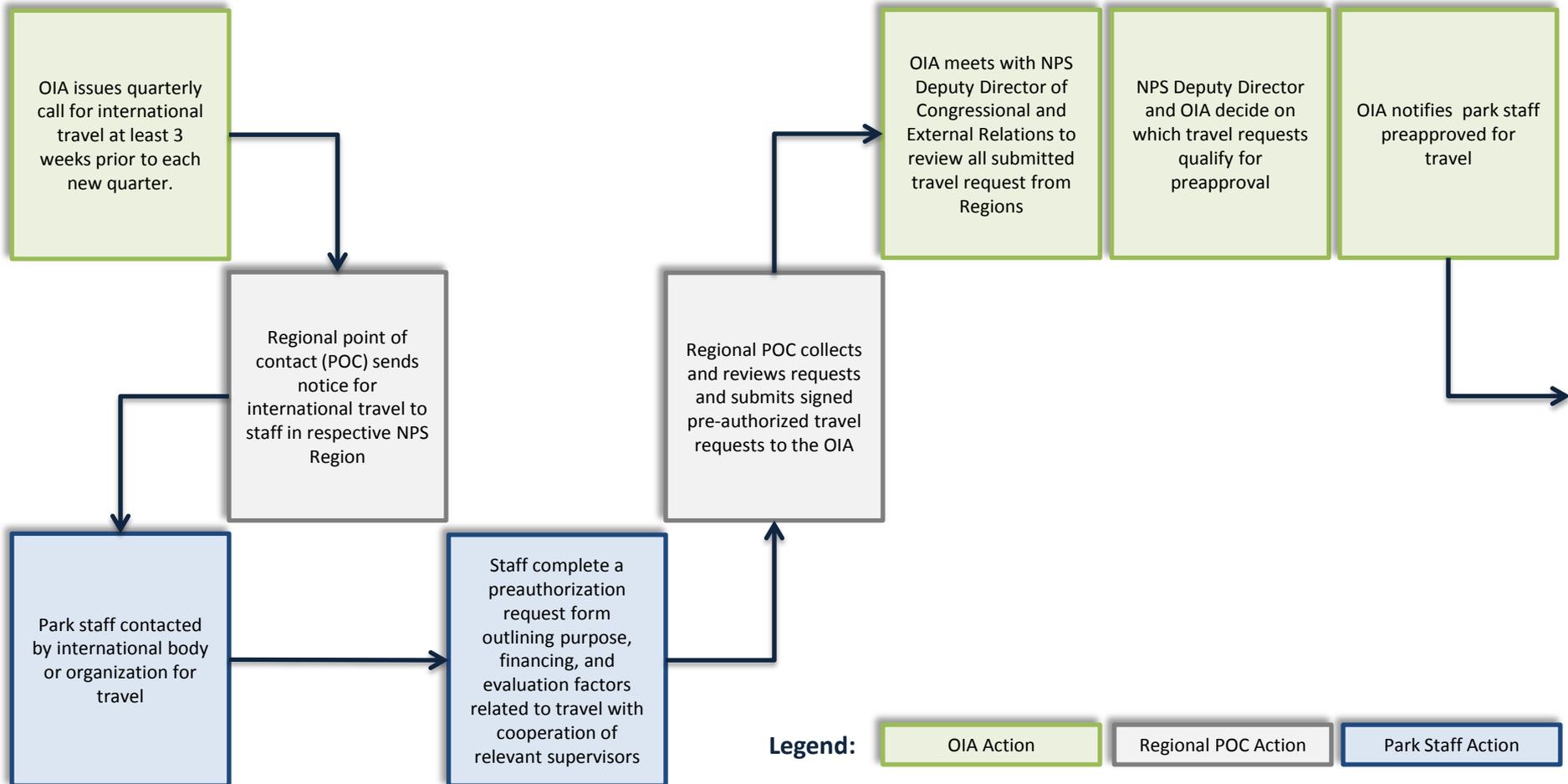


Percent of Travel Approvals by Geographic Region (FY10-FY14)

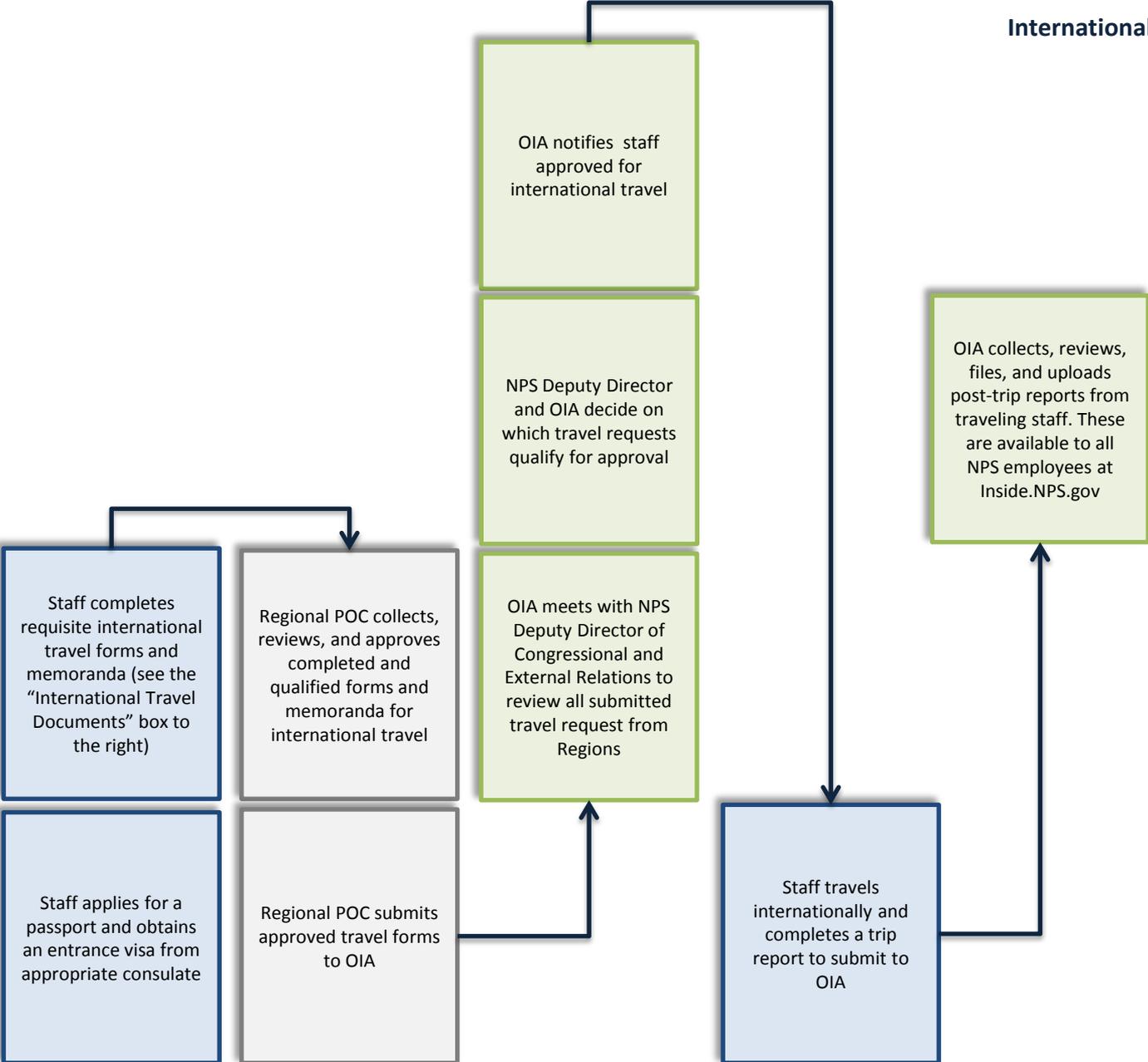


International Travel Authorization Process

Since the NPS is not the lead agency in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, it is imperative that all NPS international activities are coordinated through the OIA to ensure that they have the Director’s support and fit within broader U.S. foreign policy objectives. In order to ensure that international activities meet these objectives, the OIA coordinates the approval for all international travel of NPS employees through an established and extensive process.



International Travel Authorization Process



International Travel Documents

Justification Memo: This memo collects travel destination, dates, and purpose.

Foreign Travel Certificate (Form DI-1175): This form of the Department of the Interior collects travel destination, dates, purpose, financing, and certifications regarding travel requirements.

Ethics Form (DI-2000): This form requires disclosure of contributions for travel, describing the nature of the benefit, as well as review travel by an ethics official and a supervisor.

Country Clearance Request: This request captures contact, passport, travel, and accommodations information to send to the U.S. Embassy in the country of travel.

Travel Authorization: This system outlines travel costs, flights, accommodations, and dates.

International Volunteers-in-Parks Program

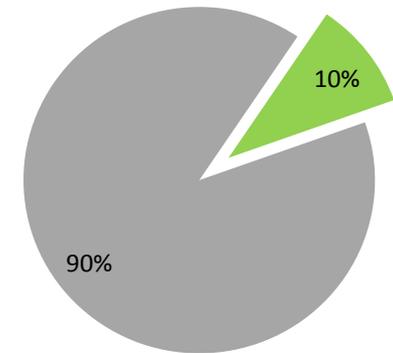
As a leader in the management of protected areas, the NPS believes in sharing this mission with the world. To facilitate this goal, the International Volunteers-in-Parks (IVIP) Program coordinates volunteer training programs for foreign students and park professionals at U.S. national parks. International volunteers, called “IVIPs,” live in or near a NPS unit, train with park professionals, and gain practical experience in a variety of natural or cultural resource fields.

The IVIP Program recruits more than 130 participants annually, facilitates direct information exchange between NPS staff and their professional peers, and provides significant volunteer assistance to NPS sites at a modest cost. The IVIP Program comes at an estimated 10% of total OIA expenditures, at a cost of about \$88,000 annually. However, this figure is dwarfed by the value provided to NPS through IVIP volunteer hours. An average across FY09 to FY14 reveals a consistent value of volunteer hours at approximately \$1.5 million annually. Put another way, every dollar invested in the IVIP returns sixteen dollars to the NPS.

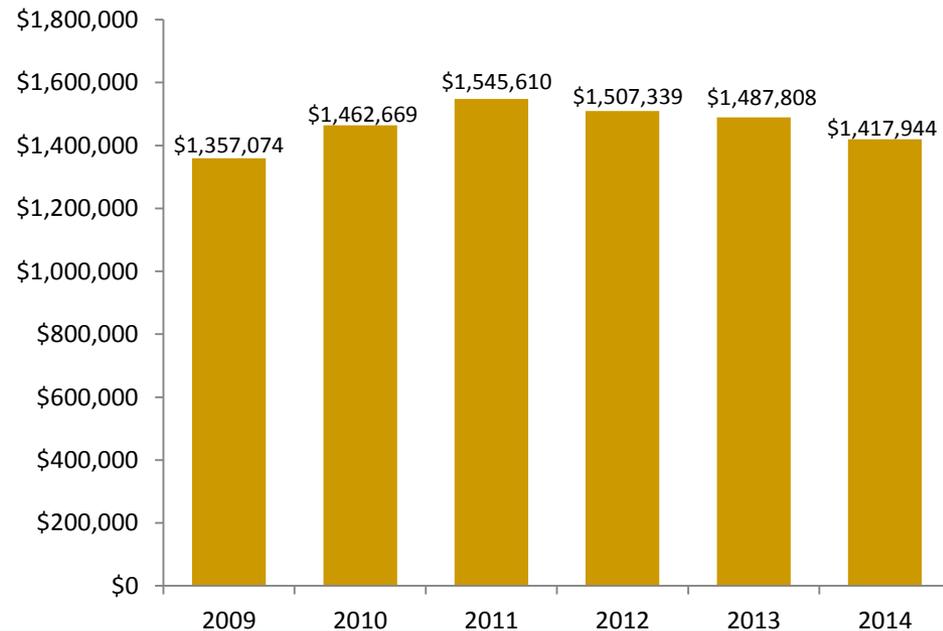
International volunteers currently come to the NPS primarily from Europe (41% in FY14) or from Asia (31% in FY14). Only a very small percentage come from Mexico & the Caribbean, Africa, Canada, Australia/Oceania, or the Middle-East (15% combined in FY14). The OIA team works with partners to diversify geographic representation among international volunteers; however, limited capacity and funding has made recruiting efforts a significant challenge.

Every dollar invested in the IVIP returns sixteen dollars to the NPS.

International VIP Program
(estimate % of total OIA expenditures)

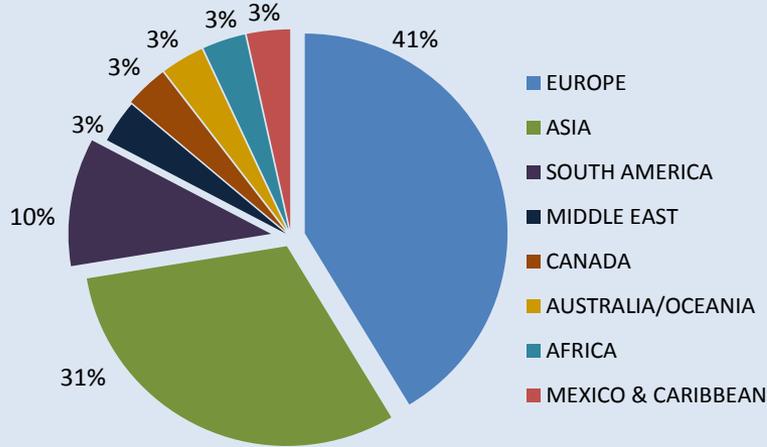


Total Value to NPS of International Volunteers (FY09-14)



International Volunteers-in-Parks Program

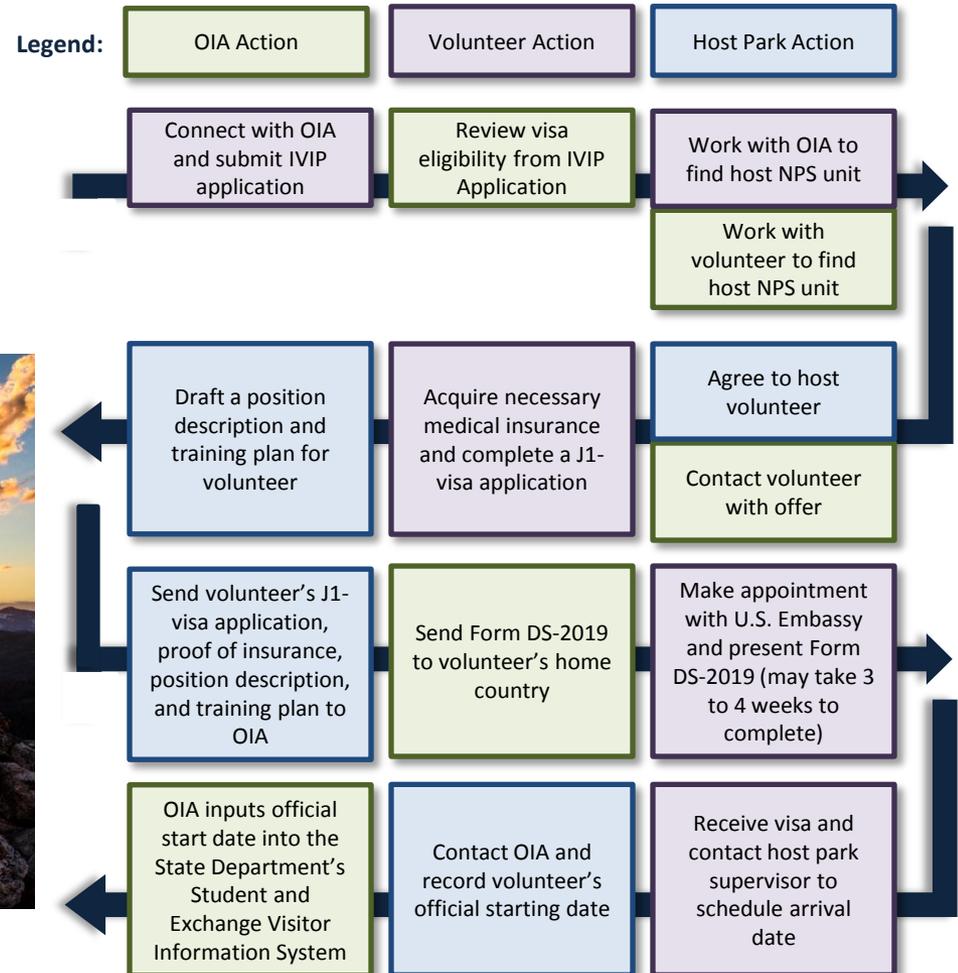
International Volunteers by Geographic Region (FY14)



National Parks inspire individuals from around the world.

IVIP Process

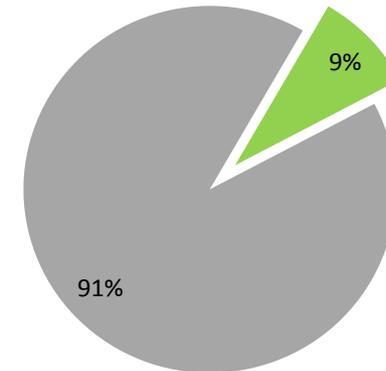
As is evident by the process map below, recruiting, placing, and hosting an international volunteer takes time (about 3 to 4 months). The OIA supports both parks and volunteers at every step of this process. This can be a very time-intensive process for the OIA, especially for when it's the park's first experience.



Technical Assistance and Exchange

The NPS receives numerous requests each year for assistance in the planning and management of foreign parks and protected areas. While requests often come directly from protected site managers, other Department of the Interior bureaus, federal agencies, and the Executive Office, periodically ask the NPS to provide assistance to projects in other countries. The OIA evaluates each request based on the NPS' strategic priorities and availability of resources. Currently, most technical assistance takes place on a cost-shared basis.

Technical Assistance and Exchange
(estimate % of total OIA expenditures)



Case: Technical Assistance in Nyungwe National Park

Established in 2005, Nyungwe National Park, located in southwestern Rwanda, spans some 247,000 acres and protects the largest expanse of mid-elevation mountain rainforest in Africa. Although the park envisioned itself as the top birding destination in Africa's Rift Valley, it had very little established infrastructure, visitor facilities, or concessions operations – and no in-depth planning had been undertaken on how to achieve this goal.

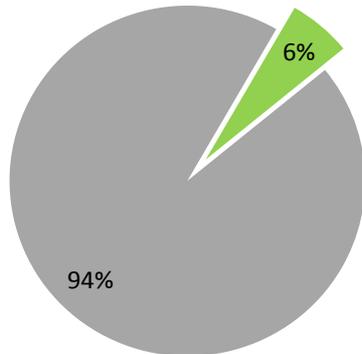
Working with the nongovernmental organization Development Alternatives Inc., NPS specialists traveled to Rwanda's Nyungwe National Park to provide assistance on concessions management and management of bird watching activities. NPS assembled two 3-person teams to address these needs at Nyungwe. One team reviewed concession operations, met with local stakeholders and tour operators, and focused on developing a Commercial Services Strategy. The other team assessed birding opportunities, provided training on NPS methods of trail construction, and developed an overall bird watching management plan for Nyungwe.



Nyungwe National Park is home to the Banda Community which offers visitors a cultural experience during their visit.

International Delegation Coordination

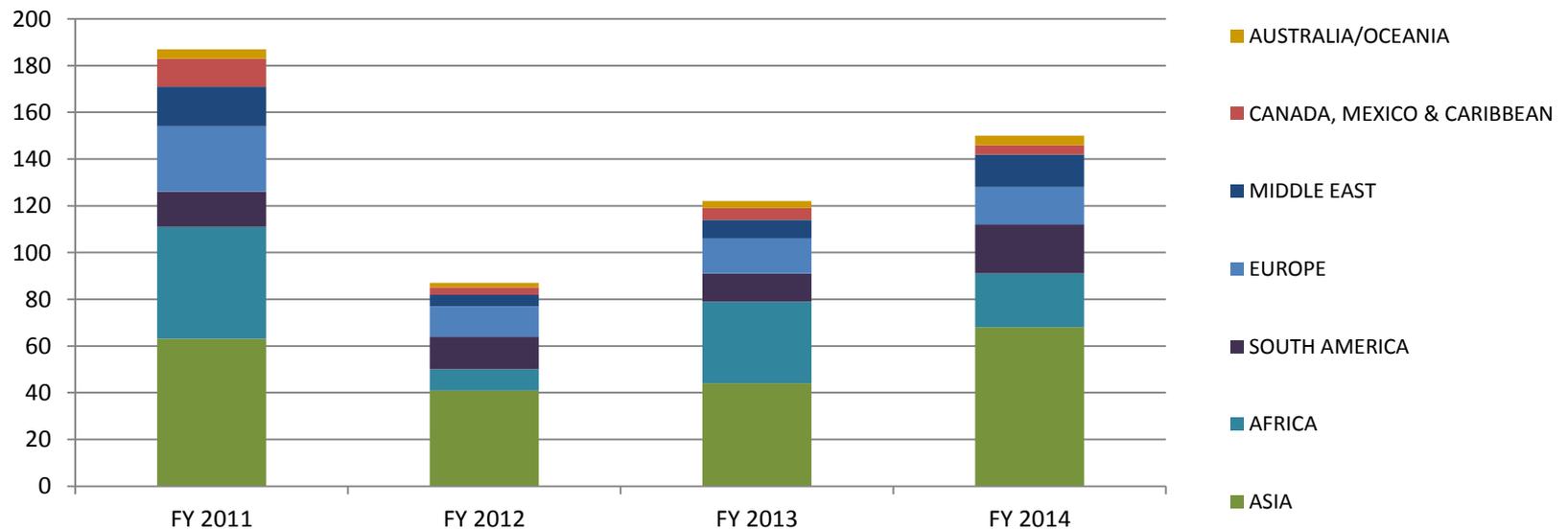
International Delegation Coordination (estimate % of total OIA expenditures)



OIA hosts approximately 140 individuals from around the world every year.

The U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) brings thousands of international exchange participants to the United States every year to learn more about American institutions of governance. A subset of these IVLP visitors, as well as other international delegates, connect with the NPS to discuss conservation efforts and land management practices of the NPS. The OIA arranges and delivers briefings on these delegations' behalf. The chart below captures the number and origin of these visitors over the past four years. The OIA hosts approximately 140 individuals from around the world in its DC office every year, typically in small settings of about three delegates. The past four years has seen significant representation from delegations originating in Asia and Africa. The OIA also coordinates numerous study tours at NPS units around the country for international delegations.

Number of Foreign Delegation Visitors Hosted in OIA DC Office by Geographic Region (FY11-FY14)

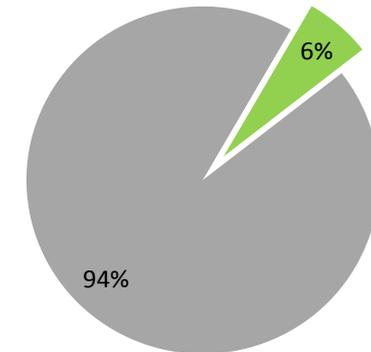


Sister Park Coordination

The Sister Park initiative is an informal network of non-binding relationships between the U.S. and foreign protected areas that share similar natural or cultural resources and management issues. While the OIA coordinates and provides guidance on the Sister Park initiative, each park manages its sister park partnership according to its own needs and interests. While several sister park partnerships have received funding from the OIA (partnerships with Chile and Mexico recently), the vast majority have to fund their partnerships with donor support. More than 40 national parks have developed long-term partnerships with counterparts in 20 countries.

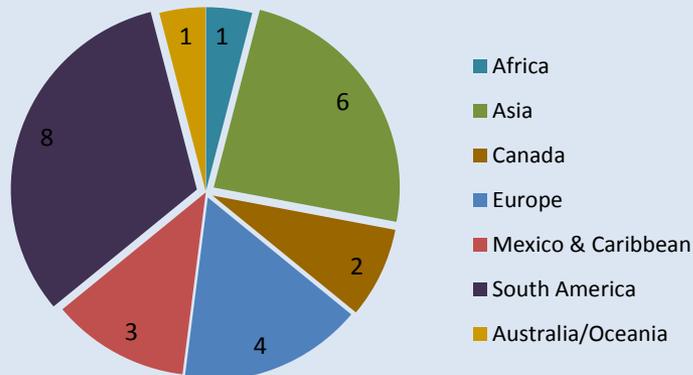
The great majority of NPS sister park partnerships are established between natural resource parks. Among the 25 active sister park relationships, most are managed by parks in the Pacific West and Intermountain regions of the NPS. Sister park relationships remain active among many geographic regions: Africa, Asia, Canada, Europe, Mexico and the Caribbean, South America, and Australia/Oceania. Currently, over half of NPS sister parks reside in South America and Asia.

Sister Park Coordination
(estimate % of total OIA expenditures)

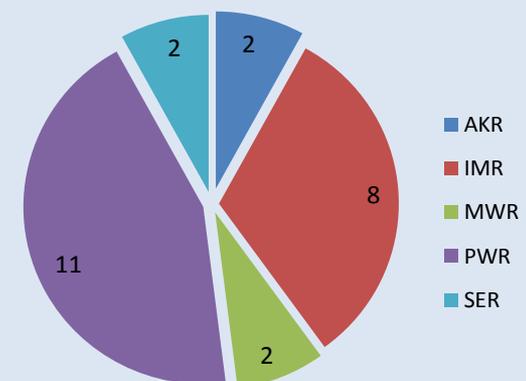


More than 40 national parks have developed long-term partnerships with counterparts in 20 countries.

Active Sister Park Relationships by Geographic Region



Active Sister Park Relationships by NPS Region





Rocky Mountain National Park enjoys sister park relationships with the mountainous Tatras National Parks of Slovakia and Poland, as well as the Monteverde and Arenal Volcano National Parks of Costa Rica.

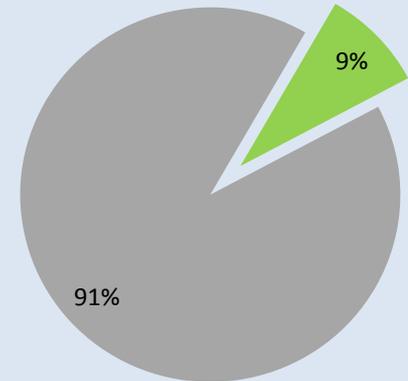
Information Requests and Policy Coordination

OIA personnel advise the NPS Director on international issues and keep NPS leadership informed about international activities and conservation-related developments. To this end, the OIA develops and disseminates information and briefing materials on NPS international activities for outreach within the agency, with program partners, other U.S. Government agencies, multilateral development institutions, foreign counterpart agencies, and Non-Governmental Organizations. The OIA also responds directly to inquiries from NPS leadership or from the field on policy pertaining to international activities.

“We live in a global community. NPS is a leader in preservation programs and has an obligation to share its knowledge. Through International Affairs, we can make contacts with our counterparts throughout the world and learn as well as teach.”

survey respondent

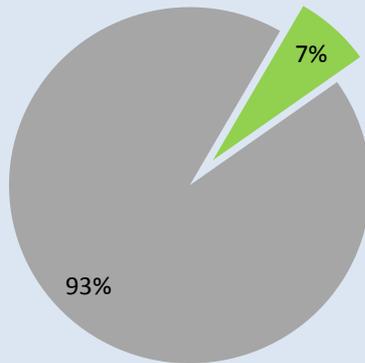
Information Request and Policy Coordination
(estimate % of total OIA expenditures)



International Cooperation Specialist Rudy D'Alessandro engages an international delegation from Georgia.

International Initiatives and Partnerships

International Initiatives and Partnerships (estimate % of total OIA expenditures)



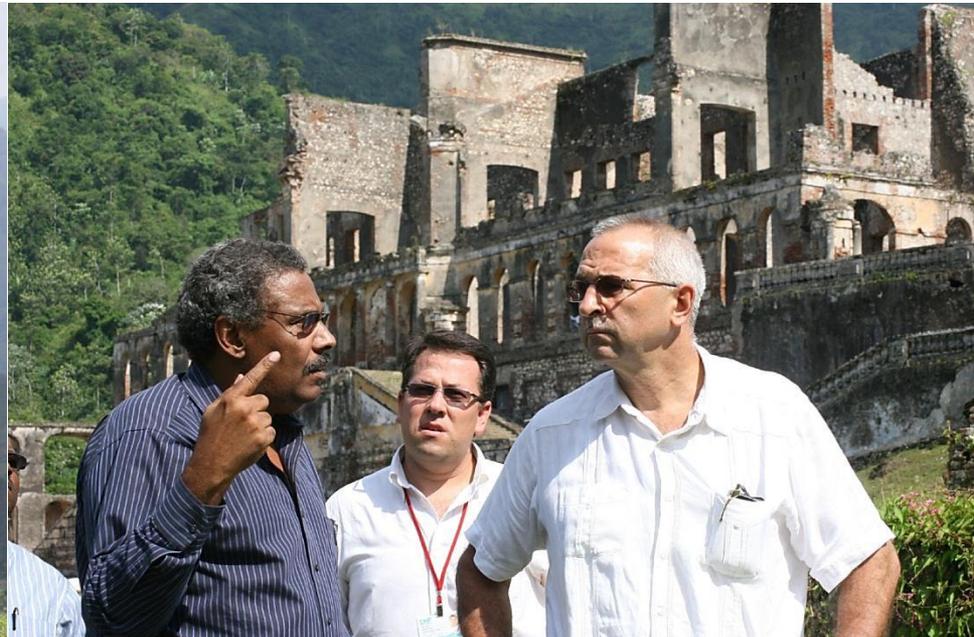
OIA used to host an international seminar on park management and conservation, but has since discontinued the program due to financial considerations. The OIA still coordinates NPS participation in a number of international seminars and programs. The *International Union for Conservation of Nature* (IUCN) hosts several conventions important to the work of the OIA: the World Conservation Congress discusses international environmental and developmental challenges, the World Protected Areas Leadership Forum shares information regarding protected area management globally, and the World Parks Congress works to better understand the role of protected areas in conserving nature and promoting community well-being. The *International Ranger Federation* (IRF) hosts the triannual World Ranger Congress to discuss issues affecting protected area rangers and develop policy recommendations on those issues. The *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO) hosts the World Congress on Biosphere Reserves to discuss matters of sustainable development and nature conservation around biosphere reserves; the United States is home to 47 biosphere reserves – more than any other country. OIA also engages with the *North American Intergovernmental Committee on Cooperation for Wilderness and Protected Area Conservation* (NAWPA Committee) a cooperation framework among wilderness management agencies in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

Additionally, the OIA has worked to develop strategic partnerships with leading organizations involved in the protected area management space such as the non-profit organization *Global Parks*. OIA staff continue to identify potential opportunities for partnership.



International park experts, including NPS Director Jarvis (far right), speak to the power of protected areas at the World Parks Congress in Sydney, Australia.

Other Activities



Haitian officials worked with the NPS in the management of its Parc National La Visite (left), as well as for the protection of its World Heritage Site, the Palace of Sans Souci (right).

Other Activities

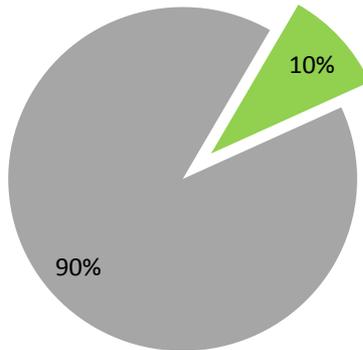
In addition to the several work streams already discussed, the OIA also spends about 10% of its resources on general administration and 7% on other activities.

General administration includes all activities related to budgeting, payroll, employee performance review, and staff trainings. Those activities classified as “other” include the development and administration of an online *World Heritage Junior Ranger Program*, the maintenance of the OIA’s content on NPS.gov and Facebook.com, the management of the NPS *First Wednesday BrownBag Seminar* series, as well as participation in the *National Treasury Employees Union* (NTEU).

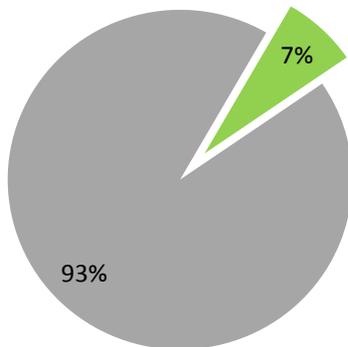


Argentine Rangers learn about high altitude search and rescue work in Denali National Park.

General Administration
(estimate % of total OIA expenditures)



Other
(estimate % of total OIA expenditures)



“Protected area management is inherently a global discipline, and collaboration across borders is essential for the long-term success of the preservation of cultural and natural resources.”

survey respondent

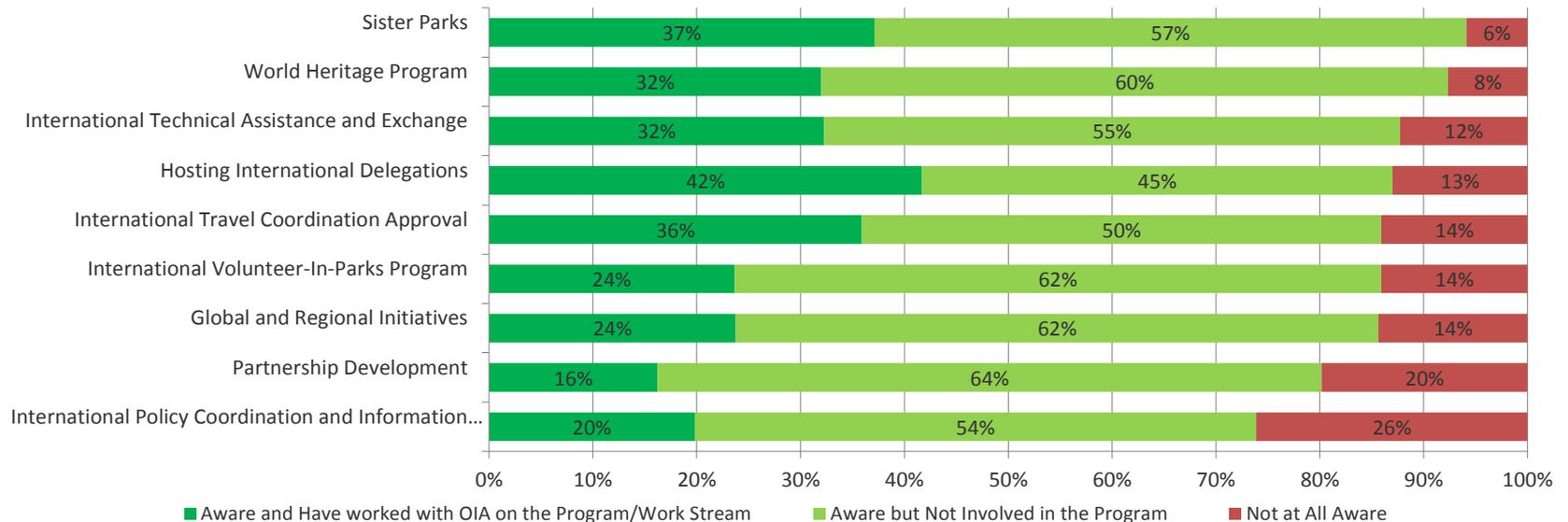
Stakeholder Survey

The Office of International Affairs conducted a nine-question electronic survey over two weeks in March, 2015. This survey was developed to solicit feedback from key OIA constituencies on three themes: 1) their familiarity with OIA and its programs, 2) their opinions regarding OIA’s mission achievement through its programs, and 3) their satisfaction regarding their interface with the OIA and its programs.

This survey was distributed to an extensive list of OIA stakeholders, including NPS leadership, all park superintendents, Department of the Interior staff, foreign parks, foreign government and embassy staff, international non-governmental organizations, universities, and other U.S. federal government agencies and departments. OIA received 223 responses.

Survey respondents demonstrate a strong familiarity with the OIA and many of its work streams. The OIA’s most well known programs among its stakeholders are the Sister Park program and the World Heritage Program. Over 90% of respondents were aware of these programs, and over 30% of respondents have worked with the OIA on these programs. Several other work streams also attained high awareness with over 80% of respondents familiar with the OIA’s work on international technical assistance, hosting international delegations, NPS international travel coordination, the IVIP Program, and global and regional initiatives. Less well known among OIA’s broad program portfolio was their work in international partnership development and international policy coordination – 20% and 26% of survey respondents, respectively, were not at all aware of the OIA’s work in these spheres.

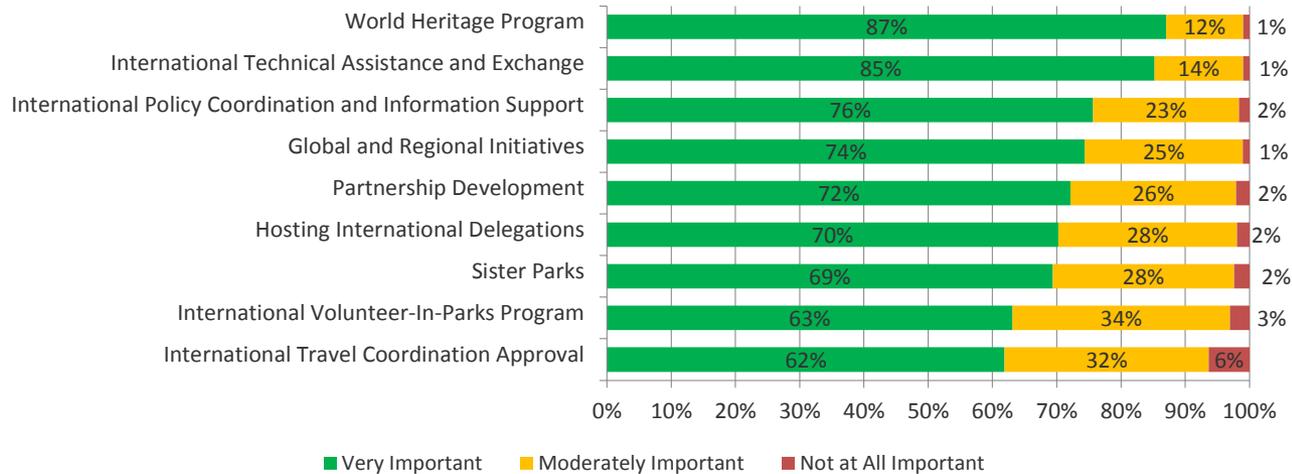
Question: To what extent are you familiar with the following NPS Office of International Affairs programs and work streams?



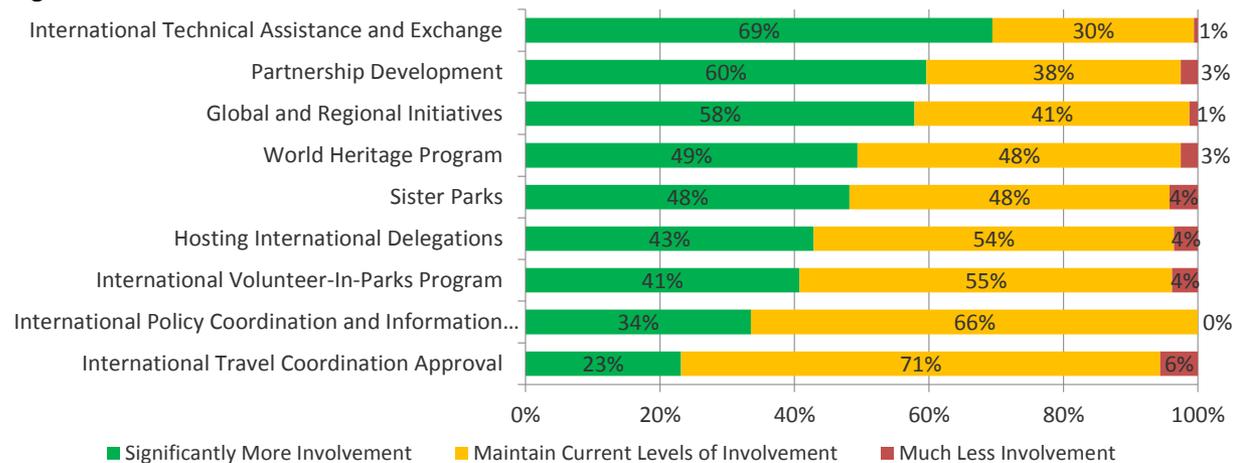
Respondents demonstrated that they were not only aware of the OIA’s work, but also that they find this work important to the office’s mission. Over 90% of the respondents found each of the office’s work streams at least “moderately important,” with over 60% rating each of the work streams as “very important.” Those activities respondents believed most important to advancing the OIA’s mission were the World Heritage Program (87% very important) and the office’s work in international technical assistance and exchange (85% very important).

Stakeholders were also surveyed on their opinions regarding the size of the OIA’s investments in their work stream portfolio. Respondents overwhelmingly believed that the OIA should either maintain or increase their current levels of involvement in their activities. Survey responses suggest that the OIA prioritize work in international technical assistance, partnership development, and global and regional initiatives. International policy coordination and international travel approval received only moderate support for more involvement by OIA.

Question: From your perspective, how important are the following programs or work streams in preserving and enhancing understanding natural and cultural heritage throughout the world?



Question: To what extent do you think the NPS Office of International Affairs should do more or less work in the following?

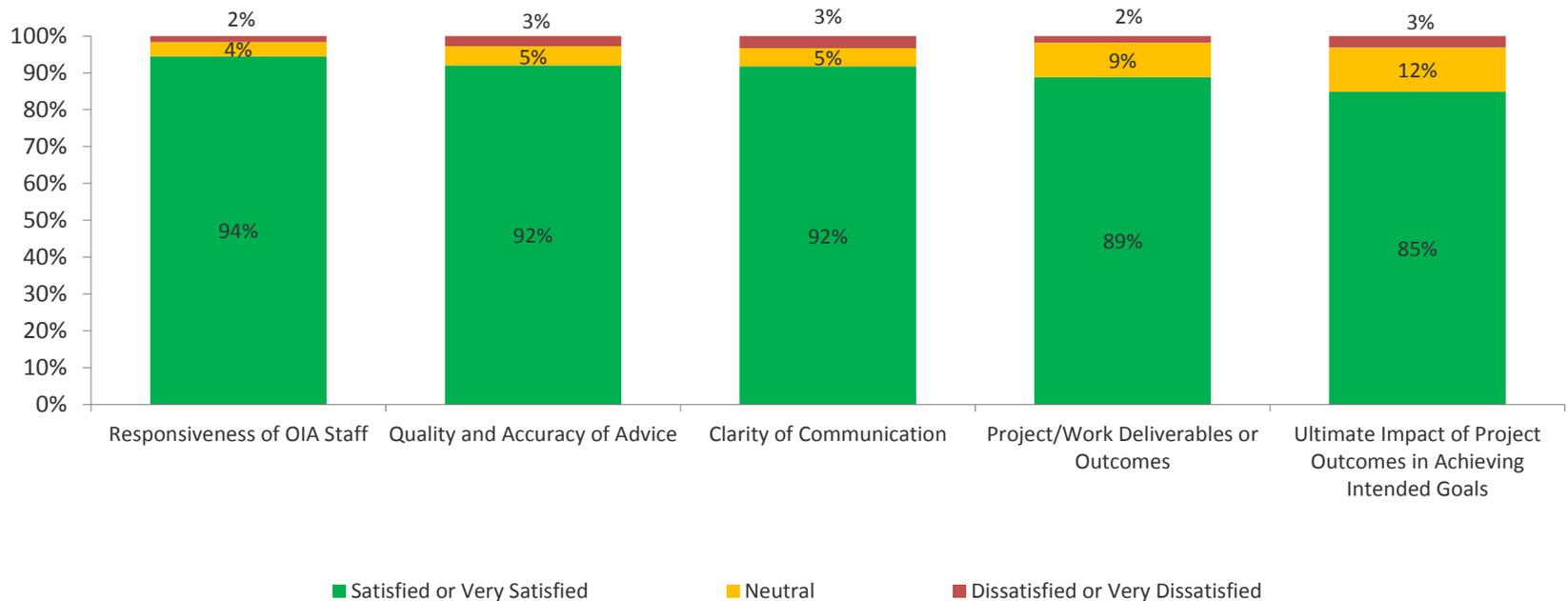


Stakeholder Survey

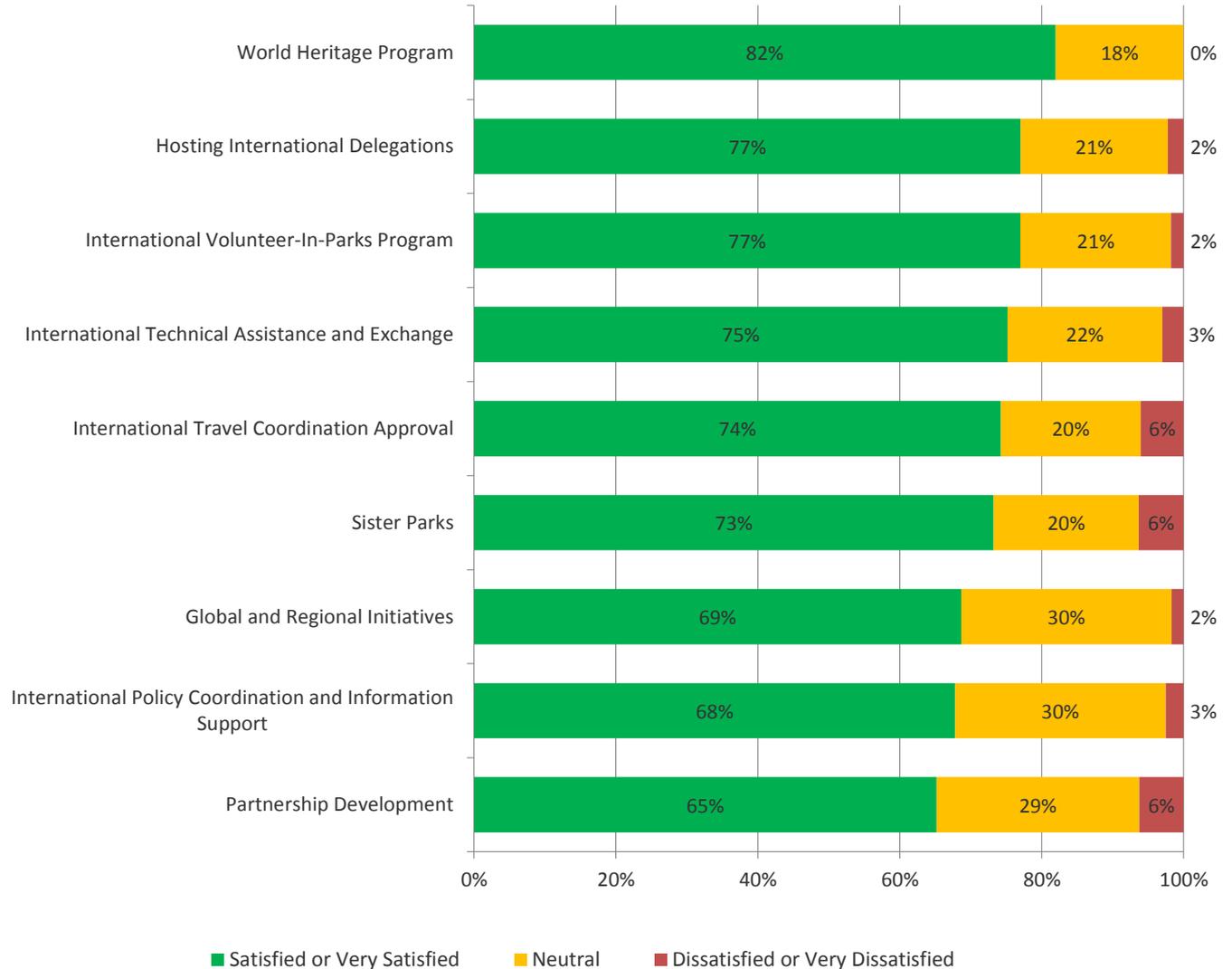
Survey respondents also provided feedback on satisfaction with their interactions with the OIA. Specifically, stakeholders rated the OIA's responsiveness, quality and accuracy of advice, clarity of communication, project deliverables, and impact on achieving attended goals. On every measure, respondents show high levels of satisfaction with the OIA. Respondents were also given the opportunity to share comments. Said one respondent, "The NPS is looked to as a global conservation leader. The OIA staff does an incredible job with the severely limited resources they have to work with. I feel that the NPS needs to invest in significant growth, especially as the global conservation issues...become more critically important to protect future generations."

The survey also sought feedback on satisfaction specific to certain programming functions. Here again, respondents feel largely satisfied with the OIA's work, especially with respect to the World Heritage Program, hosting international delegations, and the International Volunteers-in-Parks Program. The OIA's work in partnership development, international policy coordination and information support, and global and regional initiatives received relatively lower satisfaction ratings, with over 30 percent of respondents indicating either neutrality or some level of dissatisfaction.

If you have worked with the NPS Office of International Affairs, please rate your satisfaction with the following:



Please rate your overall satisfaction with the NPS Office of International Affairs' work in the following areas:



“Every time I have engaged with the OIA they have been truly wonderful to work with. We are fortunate to have such a professional group to rely upon and represent us.”
survey respondent

Budget Forecast

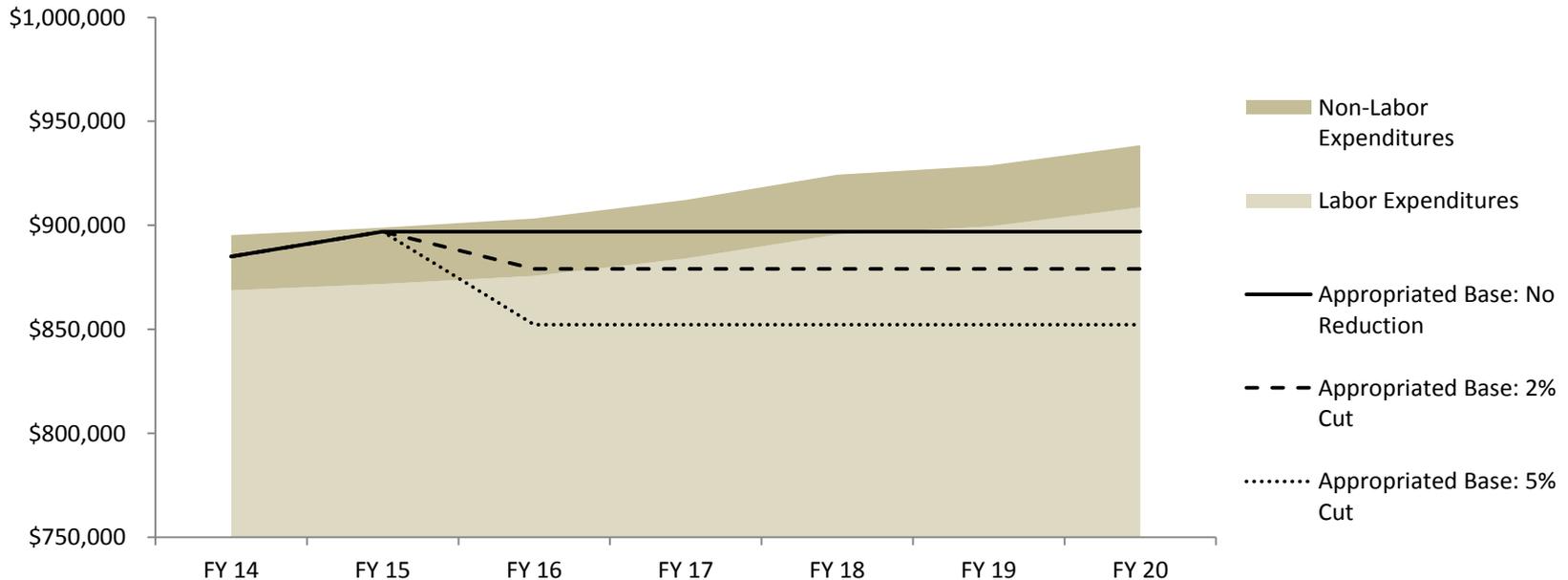
The financial projections included herein illustrate several potential budget scenarios and the corresponding impacts on OIA operations. The projections represent the office's internal estimates for planning purposes and are not meant to communicate the intent of future congressional appropriations.

Having experienced relatively flat budgets for the past decade, the OIA explored three budget funding scenarios for FY16 to FY20:

- 1) Flat funding at FY15 levels through FY20;
- 2) A 2% reduction in FY16, with flat funding through FY20; and
- 3) A 5% reduction in FY16, with flat funding through FY20.

All three scenarios – even the least conservative – predict a deficit beginning immediately. In FY14, labor costs accounted for 97% of total OIA expenditures, leaving only 3% to cover supplies, equipment, training, contracts and cooperative agreements, and travel. As most of the office's labor costs are fixed, the OIA has very limited financial flexibility as it cannot alter most of its labor commitments. Additionally, diverting the majority of the office's budget to cover labor costs may negatively impact workforce quality and morale over time, as the OIA will have a decreasing ability to provide its employees with opportunities for promotions or recognition awards, professional development training, or up-to-date equipment and supplies. Without an additional budget increase, a consistent outside funding stream, or a reduction in personnel costs, OIA operations are not financially sustainable in the short- or long-term.

OIA Budget Projection Scenarios (FY14-FY20)



OIA Financial Projections (FY14-20)

	Actual		Projected				
	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20
No Reduction	\$885,000	\$897,000	\$897,000	\$897,000	\$897,000	\$897,000	\$897,000
2% Reduction	-	\$897,000	\$879,060	\$879,060	\$879,060	\$879,060	\$879,060
5% Reduction	-	\$897,000	\$852,150	\$852,150	\$852,150	\$852,150	\$852,150
Projected Expenditures							
Labor Expenditures	\$868,742	\$871,803	\$875,688	\$884,066	\$895,610	\$899,410	\$908,640
Non-Labor Expenditures	\$26,535	\$27,066	\$27,607	\$28,160	\$28,723	\$29,297	\$29,883
Total Expenditures	\$895,278	\$898,869	\$903,296	\$912,226	\$924,333	\$928,707	\$938,523
Projected Deficit							
No Reduction	\$ (10,278)	\$ (1,869)	\$ (6,296)	\$ (15,226)	\$ (27,333)	\$ (31,707)	\$ (41,523)
2% Reduction	-	\$ (1,869)	\$ (24,236)	\$ (33,166)	\$ (45,273)	\$ (49,647)	\$ (59,463)
5% Reduction	-	\$ (1,869)	\$ (51,146)	\$ (60,076)	\$ (72,183)	\$ (76,557)	\$ (86,373)

Cost Reduction, Operational Efficiency, and Revenue Generation Strategies

In FY14, the OIA experienced considerable budgetary strain, and this will likely continue. Without an additional budget increase, a consistent outside revenue stream, or a reduction in personnel costs, OIA operations will not be financially sustainable even over the short run. Additionally, inflation and automatic “step” increases on top of existing salaries will grow OIA expenditures in future years, diminishing the office’s spending power.

Utilize a Strategic Approach to Staffing

The OIA must develop a comprehensive succession plan and identify how to effectively adjust its workforce when attrition occurs. When replacing a newly vacant position it will be more advantageous to hire a lower-graded administrative staff member to support more process-intensive activities across the office and its various programs. International travel approval, visa applications for international volunteers, World Heritage Junior Ranger administration, basic website updates, and many other OIA functions demand substantial administrative work. By centralizing this work in an administrative staff position, the OIA’s International Cooperation Specialists would gain the capacity necessary to absorb the lost position.

Align Work with General Schedule Grades

Until the OIA is able to restructure, the office may find opportunities to more appropriately align work tasks with pay level. The OIA utilizes a small and highly capable staff to engage high-level government officials and stakeholders at home and abroad. Remaining relevant in the dynamic international arena demands staff comfortable with significant responsibility. It is of little surprise that OIA’s team is highly-graded relative to other NPS offices. Given its current organizational structure, OIA should work to have those lower-graded staff administering the more time-intensive and process-oriented work streams. OIA already does this to some extent, but there are further opportunities for alignment.

Circumscribe Office Efforts to Congressional Mandates

As is evidenced by this plan’s preceding sections, the OIA is responsible for coordinating numerous international programs and various NPS activities. Current budget realities will require the circumscription of this work to its funding mandates. The OIA receives appropriations to conduct activities in several avenues. This funding is justified for work in the World Heritage Program – to monitor World Heritage parks, respond to the World Heritage Committee inquiries, and coordinate U.S. World Heritage nominations. The funding is also justified for pursuing international agreements and technical assistance projects in concert with other domestic and international agencies. And finally, it is justified for coordinating international visitors and volunteers. Other work ancillary to these mandates will need to be re-examined. For example, international travel coordination currently consumes an estimated 12% of the OIA’s expenditures and may be outside the requirements of the office. By fully understanding office mandates, the OIA can suspend other activities as budgets require.

Explore Process Reimbursement

The OIA should explore the feasibility of requiring modest cost-recovery fees or reimbursements for some of the work it does on behalf of other parties. For instance, estimates put coordinating a single volunteer in the IVIP Program at nearly \$700 in OIA staff time. This includes a lengthy J1-VISA process and acting as the primary liaison between volunteers and their respective host parks. Charging each volunteer a one-time \$50 processing fee and each host park a \$50 per volunteer reimbursement fee could provide the office with approximately \$13,000 per year.

Cost Reduction, Operational Efficiency, and Revenue Generation Strategies

Implement Process Efficiencies

Certain OIA processes require significant time and effort to complete.

Travel Coordination – Roughly 12% of the office’s expenditures are spent on international travel coordination, equating to a cost of over \$1,200 per trip approval in FY14. Furthermore, this cost does not include staff time outside of the OIA that are also involved in this process (e.g., regional staff, Deputy Director). The costly nature of this process is partially due to the highly-graded staff involved in a relatively administrative task and the multiple rounds of reviews required at various levels of the NPS org chart. In a survey of OIA stakeholders, respondents rated travel coordination the lowest among OIA programs/work streams with regard to the office needing to be more involved in the task. Additionally, 83% of the cost of NPS international travel is typically funded by sponsorship agencies or countries, and over the last five years, only 1.6% of international travel approvals were declined at the WASO-level. Reducing staff-time taken by the international travel approval process by 50% could save the OIA over \$50,000 in staff time and free 6% in office capacity to direct toward other office priorities.

Sister Park Initiative – While the OIA is not responsible for the establishment or maintenance of sister park relationships, it does provide assistance to parks interested in identifying potential partners, maintain institutional knowledge regarding sister park relationships, and leverage its broad working network with parks abroad. This work is estimated by the OIA staff to take approximately 6% of the office’s time at an opportunity cost of about \$50,000 annually. The OIA may consider developing a guide, brochure, and/or a list of answers to frequently asked questions on establishing a sister park relationship. If such an informational source could cut back current time spent on the program by just a third, OIA would free some \$16,500 in office capacity.

International Volunteers-in-Parks Program – The OIA is currently responsible for the herculean task of recruiting, assisting, and matching international volunteers to NPS units, and coordinating these volunteers’ required reporting and documentation. International volunteers bring considerable value to the NPS every year as already discussed above, but require substantial amount of OIA staff time. This program costs the OIA 10% of its total expenditures annually. Currently, international volunteers are invited to apply on a rolling basis making recruiting, matching, and placement a year-long endeavor. The IVIP coordinator may consider adopting a more deadline-oriented process for IVIPs to include further use of informational brochures and webinars (for both volunteers and parks), and developing a cyclical seasonal application timeline. If through this standardization, the OIA cut its staff time invested in the program by one-fourth, it could free about \$22,500 annually in office capacity.

Invest in Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to the work of the NPS. The OIA has worked with numerous domestic and international stakeholders throughout its existence both formally and informally. Its work demands engagement, coordination, and cooperation with international agents. The OIA is strategically positioned to leverage its resources through formal partnerships with its stakeholder communities. For example, the OIA may investigate establishing a formalized *Friends Group of NPS World Heritage Sites* that would allow for OIA program fundraising. Similarly, OIA’s ties to international non-profit organizations such as *Global Parks* and *International Rangers Federation* suggest that there may be an opportunity to formally recruit OIA volunteers to supplement its staff efforts abroad.

Acknowledgements and Photo Credits

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Marco De León, Management Analyst



Glacier National Park established one of the first sister park relationships with Waterton Lakes National Park of Canada. Together the parks made Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park. These parks are UNESCO Biosphere Reserves and constitute a World Heritage Site.

For more information on the Office of International Affairs visit: www.nps.gov/oia

Or visit the OIA's Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/pages/USNPS-International-Affairs/146676028717853

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Officials from the Kenya Wildlife Service sign a Sister Park agreement between Sibiloi National Park in Northern Kenya and Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument in June of 2014.

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Pg 6	OIA	U.S. Delegation
Pg 8	NPS	Great Egret
Pg 11	Rodney Cammauf	Florida Panther
Pg 13	OIA	World Heritage
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Pg 15	OIA	Top, Group
Pg 15	NPS	Bottom, San José Mission
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