

March 23, 2016

Carolyn Mitchell  
Coordinator, Honors and Awards  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Re: The Landscape Architecture Medal of Excellence Nomination

Dear Colleagues:

It is with enthusiasm that I nominate the National Park Service (NPS) for the 2016 American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) Landscape Architecture Medal of Excellence Award. It would be hard to overstate just how important the NPS has been to the profession of landscape architecture. For nearly a century, NPS has served as guardian of America's iconic cultural and recreational treasures; an environmental advocate and partner in community revitalization; a world leader in the parks and preservation community; and a pioneer in the protection of America's open space.

Landscape architecture has a deep connection to the NPS and members of the ASLA were instrumental in the passage of the *National Park Service Organic Act*, which established the NPS in 1916. Today there are iconic parks and recreational spaces, covering 84 million acres of land for the public's enjoyment. The NPS Centennial is a perfect opportunity to recognize the agency's service to preserve America's natural and cultural resources, while inspiring the next generation of park stewards to experience and value public lands.

#### **A Brief History of the National Park Service**

For 100 years, the American people have entrusted the NPS with the care of their national parks. With the help of volunteers and park partners, NPS safeguards more than 400 parks and recreational spaces, preserves more than 84 million acres, and has exposed nearly 11.8 billion visitors to the natural wonders of our public, iconic spaces. Since 1916, many of America's most iconic and historic places have been set aside for the use of the public as national parks. These national treasures reflect contemporary intellectual, social, and economic changes—increasing awareness of and sensitivity toward nature and the desire to preserve some of the most spectacular landscapes and significant historical and cultural sites for the enjoyment of future generations. Today's national parks also serve as public resources, fostering education and scholarship, and the preservation of endangered landscapes, natural communities, and species. From the mountains and valleys of Yosemite, the volcanoes of Hawaii, and the shores of Ellis Island, the National Park Service has a rich legacy of protecting natural and cultural landscapes.

#### **Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service**

Landscape architects were integral to the creation and early development of the NPS. After Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. contributed language to the *Organic Act* that founded the NPS in 1916, the first Director, Stephen T. Mather, sought design professionals to build the young agency. Landscape architects, working in a Rustic Style, designed park facilities to welcome visitors and create a brand image for the national parks. The passage of the *Organic Act* on August 25, 1916, established the park service and its mission, and though it has been amended and threatened many times, it remains, 100 years hence, our primary apparatus for preserving and interpreting the national parks.

In the early parks, new campgrounds, picnic areas, roads, trails, and ranger station areas were intended to command respect for nature, the national park idea, and the fledgling agency. When the Civilian Conservation Corps and the *Wilderness Protection Act* provided a huge labor force during the Great Depression, NPS landscape architects were able to implement a system-wide set of facilities that solidified the concept of national parks in America.

After World War II, when the American people returned to the national parks in great numbers, landscape architects once again lead the NPS in choreographing experiences for visitors. The NPS Director in the 1950s and 60s, Conrad Wirth, a landscape architect, secured a \$2 billion capital improvements campaign to fund the repair, improvement and expansion of the national parks. Landscape architects lead the master planning and design of the parks to serve visitors arriving in automobiles while conserving natural systems and historic sites. The success of the campaign, called "*Mission 66*," led to the national parks becoming a household phenomenon and an archetypal source of family vacations. NPS designers departed from the Rustic Style, adopting the Modern Style of landscape architecture and architecture, seeking to create park facilities that would accommodate the largest visitor population possible.

After the passage of landmark conservation legislation in the 1960s, including the *Wilderness Act*, the *National Historic Preservation Act*, and the *Environmental Policy Act*, NPS leaders moved toward more holistic resource management. NPS landscape architecture evolved from park planning and design, to resource stewardship through interdisciplinary collaboration. NPS landscape architecture is now interwoven with all aspects of park lands conservation, from transportation and facility planning and design, to landscape sustainability and resilience planning, to climate change response, and youth-engagement in conservation efforts. NPS landscape architects are now involved in the historic preservation of cultural landscapes, increasing the sustainability of all park operations, and conducting research to understand the impacts of climate change upon park landscapes.

The creative, scientific, interdisciplinary and communication skills of landscape architects remain an invaluable contribution to NPS. Landscape architecture is a thread interwoven through all aspects of national park management, where objectives must satisfy a spectrum of complex needs. Landscape architecture has endured as a vital ingredient of national park protection, and is among the most multi-faceted and progressive arenas of practice in the landscape architecture profession.

### **Research and Preservation**

During the past few decades, the concept of historic preservation has grown beyond protection of a single building or urban district to include the historic landscape that provides the setting and context for a property as well as much larger landscapes that have regional and national significance. In 2000, NPS worked with the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), and the Library of Congress to establish the Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS). The survey was created to document historic landscapes in the United States and its territories, and to serve as tangible evidence of our nation's heritage and development.

Teams of students and interested professionals in landscape architecture, architecture, planning, horticulture, and related disciplines conduct fieldwork for HALS as short term projects. Guided by HALS documentation specialists, the participants record significant historic landscapes nationwide through measured and interpretive drawings, large-format photography, written narratives and other documentation techniques. The results not only document significant landscapes, but instill a greater

understanding of the relationship between land and history for the participant and the related community.

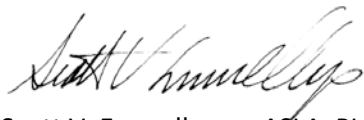
### **Project Planning and Design**

The NPS Denver Service Center (DSC) is the central planning, design, and construction management project office for the National Park Service. DSC provides cradle-to-grave project management and delivery, and is committed to environmentally responsible, fiscally sound products. The Denver Service Center projects span the nation. From the Elwha River Restoration in Olympic National Park to the National Mall Plan in Washington, D.C., the DSC focuses on the unique needs of each park. Currently, NPS and DCS are working diligently to complete the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial and CityArchRiver project, the home of the iconic St. Louis Gateway Arch. The \$380 million project, that is being led by a prominent landscape architecture firm, aims to reinvigorate downtown St. Louis by connecting the downtown area to the Gateway Arch and the Mississippi River. The project will transform the 70 acre grounds of the Gateway Arch by renovating reflecting ponds, adding new accessible pathways from the Gateway Arch to the riverfront, replacing soil and trees across the entire site, and making other landscape improvements.

### **Recognizing the National Park Service Centennial**

For the last 100 years, the NPS's rich legacy of preserving some of our nation's most treasured natural and cultural resources has inspired generations. Since its establishment, NPS has dutifully preserved and protected these special places, while accommodating millions of visitors to experience and enjoy these environments. Throughout its existence, NPS has continued to utilize the services, techniques, and resources of the landscape architecture profession for the benefit of our national spaces. For these reasons, I strongly encourage the Board of Trustees to recognize the National Park Service and its Centennial with the 2016 ASLA Landscape Architecture Medal of Excellence Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott V. Emmelkamp". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "E".

Scott V. Emmelkamp, ASLA, PLA, LEED AP  
Trustee St. Louis Chapter ASLA



March 23, 2016

Carolyn Mitchell  
Coordinator, Honors and Awards  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Re: The Landscape Architecture Medal of Excellence Nomination

Dear ASLA Trustees:

It is with great pleasure that I express my support for the nomination of the National Park Service (NPS) to receive the 2016 ASLA Landscape Architecture Medal of Excellence Award. For nearly 50 years, the National Park Foundation, in partnership with the NPS, has enriched America's national parks and programs through private support, safeguarding our heritage and inspiring generations of national park enthusiasts.

For 100 years, the National Park Service has demonstrated leadership in preserving the nation's natural and cultural treasures. The NPS has a rich legacy of joining forces with an array of stakeholders, including state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, private citizens, and other partners to build trails and playgrounds, return historic buildings to productive use, revitalize neighborhoods, expand affordable housing, protect watersheds, recognize and promote local history, and introduce the next generation to stewardship opportunities and responsibilities.

The National Park Foundation applauds this nomination and the NPS for its mission of stewardship of American's iconic national parks enjoyed by nearly 280 million visitors annually.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Will Shafroth", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Will Shafroth  
President & CEO



## National Recreation and Park Association

March 22, 2016

Carolyn Mitchell  
Coordinator, Honors and Awards  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Re: The Landscape Architecture Medal of Excellence Nomination

Dear ASLA Trustees:

It is with great pleasure that I write a letter in support of the National Park Service (NPS) for the 2016 ASLA Landscape Architecture Medal of Excellence Award.

Since 1916, the NPS has conserved more than 84 million acres of public treasures—protecting America's natural and cultural treasures. From the mountains and valleys of Yosemite, the waterfalls of the Great Smokey Mountains, and the battlefields of Virginia, the National Park Service has a rich heritage of preserving natural and cultural landscapes.

Like the National Recreation and Park Association, the NPS is dedicated to the advancement of public lands, recreation, and conservation. The Service has a rich tradition of working with an array of stakeholders such as tribes, local governments, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and individual citizens in revitalizing communities around the nation. These efforts continue to preserve local history, celebrate local heritage, and create close to home opportunities for American's to explore the great outdoors, get active, and have fun.

I encourage you to consider the National Park Service for the 2016 ASLA Landscape Architecture Medal of Excellence Award. As NPS celebrates its Centennial, the agency has been instrumental in conserving our natural and historic treasures for this and future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KOH', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kevin O'Hara  
Vice President of Urban and Government Affairs  
National Recreation and Park Association