



## STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH *All of God's Creation*

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, June 22, 2025

### *A Walk in the Park is Good for Nature and Good for Us*

**Have you heard of Vitamin N?** That's "N" for nature. "Public lands keep us healthy, counter climate change, and support resilient communities." (Dr. Carrie Besnette Hauser, President & CEO, *Trust for Public Land*, 2025)

**Here's a little history of America's parks.** In 1872, Yellowstone National Park became America's first national park. From 1890 to 1916, seven other national parks were established, including Sequoia National Park, Yosemite National Park, Mt. Ranier National Park, Glacier National Park, and Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. Over the last century and a half, millions of additional acres have been set aside as national parks and national monuments (563), wildlife refuges (588), and wilderness areas (806). Along with local and state parks, these provide millions of Americans with access to nature, while conserving vital habitat for wildlife. (*Sierra Club Sequoia Circle Briefing Paper*, 2025)

**"Today, protecting parks is more urgent than ever due to two overlapping crises:** the **biodiversity crisis** and the **extinction crisis**. One football field of natural lands disappears to development in the U.S. every 30 seconds, and in the last 40 years, wildlife population numbers have declined by 60 percent." (*Sierra Club Sequoia Circle Briefing Paper*, 2025)

**Added to those crises is another one.** "Across the country—and especially here in the Mid-Atlantic—parks are struggling under the weight of **unprecedented staffing cuts**. Rangers, scientists, maintenance workers, and cultural resource experts are being pushed out, and thanks to the ongoing hiring freeze, most of their jobs aren't being filled. Some parks have lost as much as 25% of their staff and still they're being told to stay open, greet visitors, and keep everything running as usual." (Jayda Hayman, *National Parks Conservation Association*, 6/9/25)

**"Budgets and policies are now being proposed or enacted that would dismantle our national parks and force the Park Service to abandon nearly two-thirds of the sites currently in their system....** explicitly calling for the Park Service to give up our smaller national park sites, which includes many of our nation's historic sites." (Alan Spears, *National Parks Conservation Association*, 5/27/25)

**Action is Needed!** In the next couple of weeks, the U.S. Senate is aiming to vote on a proposal to sell off millions of acres of public lands across the West ([ref](#)). "These are the public lands that wild animals call home, and where Americans are free to hike, camp, and experience nature. If this proposal passes, the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service would be required to sell two to three million acres of public lands to the highest bidder" ([ref](#)). **[Tell your U.S. senators: Don't sell off public lands.](#)** (*Environmental Action*, 6/16/25)