

## Dear National Parks,

You provide valuable services for our country and bring out the best in all of us. You bring a sense of healing, beauty, nature, and wildlife to those who seek it as well as the dark skies for the star searchers. You are a necessity because you provide dark sky areas. Open, wild land, where people can visit to experience the conviviality of nature and unique natural wonders, can all be found inside of you. I grew up going to a local park very often with my mom. When I feel stressed or anxious I like to imagine myself at a national park, just like you, traversing through nature. Many people in the government are arguing whether you are a necessity or luxury, I know you are a necessity due to many major reasons. You are a necessity because you are helpful to the environment, you have profound effects on people's mental stability and health, and prevent animal endangerment. You make money for the government, give wildlife a place to stay, and even help kids learn about nature to even become future park rangers. Without you, mankind would be able to destroy millions of acres of habitats, forests, historical sites, as well as natural and cultural heritage. You were built to protect the arroyo toad and also the ring-tailed cat, which are endangered species. I believe you are a necessity because you are a place to feel better about everything. You should remain preserved because you also offer a safe place for people to connect with themselves, you help protect endangered species, and you help lower major health risks. There have actually been studies that prove that simply looking out into your forests can relieve stress and lower our risk for cancer in the future. All of this can continue to be possible as long as we, as a whole, are able to continue to appreciate and illuminate the incredible treasures you offer. I feel like national parks deserve to be treated more proper and with more respect. One example of artifacts being mistreated is the duckbill rock in Oregon, which was unprotected and a group of teens toppled it over in 2016. It's pivotal that people who help preserve you have a section where they keep native plants and animals safe. It really is sad that your preservation is put off and not cared about; there really needs to be a change. Whenever I walk into you, I instantly feel refreshed and calm. I feel like all of my worries and concerns can wait until later, and that for now, I can just live in the moment and relax. Stress is a pain in your chest and if you don't deal with it, it only becomes more immense. The average American spends 93% of their life indoors. "Ouch." You make me think about many more things to do than just sitting on a phone or other devices all day. Going on walks aren't just making people less sad, they are actually making people happier. When I went to the Grand Canyon, it was very peaceful to see the sun set, the Colorado river rushing really fast, seeing no city lights, watching things float adrift in the river, and hearing the birds chirping in the trees. I think that it's very important that you are preserved so that we can connect to the history that is within you. You must be protected and kept clean so that everybody can utilize these parks in order to keep our natural habitats safe, clean, healthy, and beautiful. Through my reading I came across a man named Chris Mccandless, who on many accounts is an incompetent, irrational, and blunderous young man who died in the Alaskan bush. Many say that Mccandless was a reckless narcissist. I agree to some extent but in the end, there was something special about him that allowed him survive for three months almost purely on wit. The education and promotion of you is necessary to ensure people are aware that you are available equally to everyone and can measurably improve people's health and well being. That's why I believe that it is important that you exist so we can feel all these emotions: excited, tired, challenged, jubilant and robust with pride. You are misunderstood because you are a necessity that looks like a luxury. You could be seen as a luxury because you cost too much, you are not essential to our government, and you don't have many benefits. There are so many hours spent on the operations, and sometimes people can make bad decisions on taking care of you. You can sometimes cost a pretty penny, and if visitors aren't the most affluent people, that could be an issue. You are a luxury because the park fees are too expensive to enter, they are dangerous if you don't know where you're going, and you also need many resources from the government. Apart from that, you are one of America's greatest treasures, being one of the ecosystems not materially altered by human exploitation and occupation. As a whole, you generate roughly \$32 billion annually, bringing in more cash than massive businesses such as McDonalds and Nintendo. National parks are not only a place for tourism, but they also provide the greatest value of natural amenities, and recreation opportunities often lies in the ability of protected lands to attract and retain people, entrepreneurs, businesses, and retirees. Future generations deserve the right to see your values in tact and protected as we do today. Without you our environment would be in a very different place. If we don't preserve our parks, it's inevitable that uncontrolled urbanization will take over our country. We need to contribute to restoring you, however, very few parks are receiving enough money to rectify the outrageous vandalism that took place during the government shutdown. The government shutdown left you in shambles because people who would visit you littered, hurt your endangered plant and animal species, and ruined the experience for other people by being irresponsible. I know this, because I've been to a local park before and saw dead plants and trees and I unfortunately witnessed people harming them. As much as you are beautiful, you are equally as helpful. We will find ourselves in an oppressive state without you. It is inevitable that if we don't respect, take care of, and preserve you, all of these things that we need and love will be gone and destroyed, lost due to our incompetence. We need to get into contact with our government so we can help make a change for you. So now I ask you, "What do you think is the right course of action?"

Sincerely,  
8th Grade Students from HTMNC