

## **Briefing Statement**

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**Bureau:** National Park Service  
**Issue:** Changing 36 CFR 2.4 to Allow Concealed Carrying of Weapons  
**Park Site:** Servicewide  
**Date:** November 22, 2006

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### **Background:**

- With hunting prohibited by Federal statutory law in the vast majority of park areas, firearms are generally prohibited in most units of the National Park Service under 36 CFR 2.4. In the fifty-nine park units where hunting has been specifically authorized by legislation, however, firearms may generally be used during open hunting season as determined by State law.
- Firearms may be transported in a vehicle through any park area if they are temporarily inoperable or stored in such a manner as to prevent their ready use.
- The Park Service's firearms regulation is designed to ensure public safety and provide maximum protection of wildlife resources by limiting the opportunity for unauthorized use of weapons, while still providing reasonable regulatory relief for persons living within, traveling through, or conducting activities on lands adjacent to park areas.

### **Current Status:**

-The ability to carry a weapon in the national park system exists under the present regulations.

-Most weapons carried for the protection from wildlife are not adequate for that purpose. Untrained individuals attempting to protect themselves from dangerous animals often exacerbate the situation.

-Parks are safe places. While some crime does occur on park land, such statistics are far lower than other similarly-situated communities, especially when considering that the National Park System has approximately 280 million visits each year. Right to carry laws do not reduce crime.

-With current border issues and conflicts, armed citizens attempting to assist rangers could present a volatile situation putting the private citizen or ranger's life in jeopardy rather than providing law enforcement assistance.

-Visitors are not reassured by the presence of other visitors carrying weapons when in fact the opposite is true.

-There are wide differences nationally in the criteria to obtain a concealed carry permit. Most states do not require regular competency testing.

- Other Federal Bureaus/Facilities that do not allow concealed carry: US Army Corp of Engineers Sites, US Fish and Wildlife Service Refuges, All Federal Buildings (even if located in areas that allow concealed carry), Military Installations, Post Offices.

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**Contact: (Name and telephone number)**

**BUREAU:** National Park Service  
**ISSUE:** Prohibition of Firearms in National Parks  
**PARK OR PROGRAM:** Regulations and Special Park Uses

**Key Points:**

- The NPS does not support any change in the current regulation found in 36 CFR 2.4 which prohibits possessing, carrying, or using a weapon in virtually all units of the NPS.
- Parks are safe places. While some crime does occur on NPS managed lands, such statistics are far lower than other similarly-situated communities, especially when considering that the National Park System has approximately 280 million visits each year.
- "Right to carry" laws do not reduce crime. Armed citizens attempting to assist rangers could present a volatile situation putting the private citizen's or ranger's life in jeopardy.

**Background:**

- Firearms were first prohibited in Yellowstone National Park in the 1870s to address poaching.
- With hunting prohibited by Federal statutory law in the vast majority of park areas, firearms are generally prohibited in most units of the National Park Service (NPS) under 36 CFR 2.4.
- In the 59 park units where hunting has been specifically authorized by legislation, however, firearms may generally be used during open hunting season as determined by State law.
- Other Federal bureaus/facilities that do not allow carrying of firearms include the following: U.S. Army Corp of Engineers sites, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Refuges, all Federal buildings, military installations, and Post Offices.

**Current Status:**

- Firearms may be transported in a vehicle through any park area if they are made inoperable or stored in such a manner as to prevent their ready use.
- The firearms regulation is designed to ensure public safety and provide maximum protection of wildlife resources by limiting the opportunity for unauthorized use of weapons, while still providing reasonable regulatory relief for persons living within, traveling through, or conducting activities on lands adjacent to park areas.
- Most weapons carried for the protection from wildlife are not adequate for that purpose. Untrained individuals attempting to protect themselves from dangerous animals often exacerbate the situation.
- Recently, a bill was introduced in the Senate that would have allowed individuals to carry firearms in units of the National Park System. This proposed bill caused tremendous media attention to include editorials and articles in national and local newspapers and telephone calls from Congressional offices.

**Prepared by:**

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