

Dear Colleagues,

For many of us at Grand Canyon, nearly every day we think of the words that President Theodore Roosevelt spoke when he stood at the South Rim in 1903. “Leave it as it is. You cannot improve upon it. The ages have been at work on it, and man can only mar it. What you can do is to keep it for your children, your children’s children, and for all who come after you, as one of the great sights which every American if he can travel at all should see.” We take these words to heart throughout the NPS as we steward the nation’s natural and cultural resources for future generations. Those of you who love the park know that our mission can only be met when employees can thrive, and it has been my great honor to stand beside you to fulfill our park purpose. You are a crucial cornerstone to our nation’s conservation values and your respect for one another galvanizes your commitment.

When I arrived at Grand Canyon National Park in 2016, I knew we needed to create a more respectful and inclusive workplace, yet I didn’t really know how strong you were until we started working together. You have taken initiative to modernize our work with efforts like collaborative planning processes, updated budget formulation, new engagement strategies for visitors, better tools for search and rescue, updated archeological preservation techniques, a greener fleet and cleaning products, safer aviation – the list goes on. You have built a more resilient organization, and you can call on that resilience now and into the future.

The past several months have been life changing for me. My experiences have served to reinforce the core of my life’s values - compassion, fairness, honesty, civility, and respect, and I will always stay involved in protecting our nation’s public lands and democratic principles. With respect and admiration for the women and men of the National Park Service, I have submitted my resignation to acting Director Smith. My last day as Superintendent of Grand Canyon National Park will be March 31, 2019 and I commit to a smooth transition of responsibilities.

Twenty-nine years of federal service have been a true gift to me, made meaningful by both the work and more importantly, the colleagues and friends who have delivered so much to the nation. Thank you for each and every day that you put into managing the resources under your care and providing visitors with a transformative experience. It is a difficult road at Grand Canyon – with challenges in recruitment and hiring, ever increasing visitation, and threats to park resources – all made more difficult in times of uncertainty. My hope for each of you is that you’ll continue to grow and learn as you implement the mission of this extraordinary organization. Please know that your efforts mean so much to so many.

Finally, be proud of the substantial progress that you have made toward building a more respectful and inclusive workplace. Last week, the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results were reported and show that employees who care about Grand Canyon are making a difference. Since 2016, important indices of workplace conditions have gone up – the inclusion quotient is up 10 points, training/development is up 15 points, support for diversity is up 14 points, strategic management is up 20 points, empowerment is up 17 points, and fairness is up

18 points. These gains are directly attributable to those of you who have chosen to stand up to make a better workplace at Grand Canyon National Park.

With sincere thanks and devotion,

Chris Lehnertz, Superintendent