

## **GUNS IN NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE REFUGES**

- In recent months, the National Rifle Association and others have launched a concerted effort, aimed at both the U.S. Congress and the U.S. Department of the Interior, to overturn current restrictions on possession of loaded firearms in National Parks and Wildlife Refuges.
- Current regulations--36 CFR 2.4 applicable to the National Park Service and 50 CFR 27.42 applicable to the Fish and Wildlife Service--generally prohibit individuals from possessing loaded guns in parks and refuges. Unloaded guns may be possessed when they are rendered temporarily inoperable or when they are packed, cased, or stored in a manner that will prevent their ready use.
- Legislation to change these regulations has been introduced in both the House and Senate: H.R. 5434 by Representative Jeb Hensarling (TX) and S. 2619 by Senator Tom Coburn (OK).
- In addition, on February 22, Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne announced the start of a process to "update" existing firearms regulations to reflect "...the laws by which the host States govern transporting and carrying firearms on their analogous public lands." Secretary Kempthorne promised to issue the proposed changes by April 30 for public comment.
- Parks and refuges across the nation, including ones in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia, will be affected if the current firearm restrictions are overturned.
- The sense of sanctuary experienced by park visitors would be lost and visitor safety and beloved natural and cultural park resources would be put at risk. Poaching (already a significant and growing problem in many parks including Shenandoah) would become more prevalent.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

If you're concerned about the prospect of loaded guns in parks and refuges:

- 1) Write to your Senators and Member of Congress:
  - Ask them to oppose legislative efforts to change existing park and refuge regulations.
  - Tell them that existing regulations are reasonable and sensibly serve to protect park resources, visitors, and wildlife.
  - Allowing loaded guns in parks and refuges could lead to a dramatic increase in random and unnecessary killing of wildlife.
  - Allowing loaded guns in parks and refuges would degrade the visitor experience, jeopardize safety, and put natural and cultural park resources at risk.
- 2) Plan to comment on Secretary Kempthorne's proposed regulatory changes when they are issued at the end of April. Visit [www.potomacappalachian.org](http://www.potomacappalachian.org) for more information.

