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10 Facts You Didn't Know about Our Nation's Public Lands

Parks Across the Country – From astronaut training sites to locations for epic movies, our public lands have played an integral role in U.S. history. These lands belong to the American people, and can be anything from a small playground downtown to a sprawling National Park. The size and scope of the land, natural resources, and family and adventure activities is immense. Public lands are available for all people to enjoy – in every community – and are our responsibility as well.

After celebrating our nation's Independence Day, and with National Public Lands Day (NPLD) events being scheduled for the fall, now is a perfect time to learn more about the public lands in your neighborhood and around the country.

Here are some interesting facts you may not know about our public lands:

1. The oldest public park is Plaza de la Constitució in St. Augustine, Florida, which was established in 1573.
2. Many believe that Captain Kidd buried his treasure in 1699 on Charles Island in Connecticut's Silver Sands State Park.
3. Alabama Hills in California has many unique natural formations that have been used to simulate alien worlds for Star Trek Generation.
4. Each year, only about half of the 10,000 climbers that attempt to climb Mount Rainer in Washington succeed.
5. Shenandoah National Park in Virginia is the only known habitat for a species of salamander.
6. Mount McKinley, located within Denali National Park and Preserve in Alaska, is the highest mountain in North America.
7. Cumberland Island National Seashore in Georgia offers over 50 miles of hiking trails. The trails go through the maritime forest, sand dunes and past salt marshes and into freshwater swamps.
8. In 1969, Apollo 14 astronauts Alan Shepard, Edgar Mitchell, Joe Engle and Eugene Cernan visited Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve in Idaho. There they explored the lava landscape in order to learn the basics of volcanic geology in preparation for future trips to the moon.
9. In 1960, opening shots of *Spartacus* were filmed at California's Death Valley National Park.
10. The Ice Age National Scenic Trail in Wisconsin, established in 1980, traces the ancient 1,200 mile path of a huge North American glacier. This glacier created the state's many lakes, river valleys, gently rolling hills, and ridges.

Learn more about America's public lands by visiting www.publiclandsday.org.

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Public Lands Facts, page 2 of 2

National Public Lands Day (NPLD) will take place on September 25, 2010, and is a project of the National Environmental Education Foundation, is a chance to help keep our public lands beautiful.

Each year, thousands of Americans take part in NPLD, the nation's largest hands-on volunteer effort to improve and enhance the public lands. Last year, 150,000 volunteers participated at more than 2,000 locations across the country. Their efforts to build trails, remove invasive species, paint signs, beautify landscaping, remove trash, etc. totaled millions of dollars in improvements.

NPLD is also a fee-free day in many federally managed lands. And volunteers who participate are given coupons for second free entry into their favorite federal public land areas that have entrance fees.

To celebrate our public lands, please visit www.publiclandsday.org and find a location near you.

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The National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) provides knowledge to trusted professionals who, with their credibility, amplify messages to national audiences to solve everyday environmental problems. Together, we generate lasting positive change.

NEEF partners with professionals in health, education, media, business and public land management to promote daily actions for helping people protect and enjoy the environment. Through our primary programs -- Classroom Earth, National Public Lands Day, National Environmental Education Week, Business and Environment, Earth Gauge® and Health & Environment -- we offer Americans knowledge to live by. To learn more, call (202) 833-2933 or visit www.neefusa.org.