Rule covers members of federally-recognized American Indian tribes

Media Contact: National Park Service News Release - Jeffrey Olson, Jeffrey_olson@nps.gov 202-208-6843; Joe Watkins, joe_watkins@nps.gov 202-354-2126
For Immediate Release: April 17, 2015
Print PDF

WASHINGTON – The National Park Service has proposed to modify the regulation governing the gathering of plants in national parks. The rule would allow members of federally recognized Indian tribes with traditional associations to areas within specific units of the National Park System to gather and remove plants or plant parts for traditional purposes. The gathering and removal allowed by the rule would be governed by agreements that may be entered into between the National Park Service and the tribes, and would also be subject to permits that identify the tribal members who may conduct these activities. The rule would prohibit commercial uses of gathered materials.

To be published Monday April 20 in the Federal Register, 36 CFR Part 2, Gathering of Certain Plants or Plant Parts by Federally Recognized Indian Tribes for Traditional Purposes, will be open for public comment for 90 days through Monday, July 20, 2015.

“The proposed rule respects tribal sovereignty and the government-to-government relationship between the United States and the tribes,” said National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis. “It also supports the mission of the National Park Service and the continuation of unique cultural traditions of American Indians.”

Many units of the National Park System contain resources important to the continuation of American Indian cultures. Indian tribes have actively sought the ability to gather and use plant resources for traditional purposes such as basketry and traditional medicines while ensuring the sustainability of plant communities in parks. At the same time, park managers and law enforcement officers need clear guidance regarding their responsibilities for enforcing park regulations with respect to the use of park resources by American Indians. The proposal provides an approach to plant collecting by members of federally recognized tribes that can be applied across the National Park Service.

In drafting the proposed rule, National Park Service staff met with or contacted more than 120 Indian tribes. Tribal consultation that followed indicates that the approach taken in the proposed rule would address the need for gathering while respecting tribal sovereignty.

Comments on the proposed rule should reference the National Park Service and Regulation Identifier Number (RIN) 1024-AD84, and can be submitted online through the Federal Rulemaking Portal: http://www.regulations.gov, which provides instructions for submitting comments; or by mail to: National Park Service, Joe Watkins, Office of Tribal Relations and American Cultures, 1201 Eye Street NW, Washington, DC 20005. The National Park Service will accept public comments on the proposed rule through Monday, July 20, 2015.

Comments and suggestions on the information collection requirements in the proposed rule should be sent to the Desk Officer for the Department of the Interior at OMB-OIRA by fax at (202) 395-5806 or by e-mail to OIRA_Submission@omb.eop.gov. Please provide a copy of your comments by email to madonna_baucum@nps.gov or by mail to: Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20240. Please reference "1024-AD84" in the subject line of your comments. You may review the Information Collection Request online at http://www.reginfo.gov. Follow the instructions to review Department of the Interior collections under review by OMB. Comments on the information collection requirements must be received by Wednesday, May 20, 2015.