

# National parks group meets in Yellowstone

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By The Associated Press

Monday, January 26, 2009 7:05 PM MST

JACKSON -- A commission examining the national parks is meeting in Yellowstone this week.

The National Parks Second Century Commission will conduct its third meeting today through Thursday at Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel.

Convened by the nonprofit National Parks Conservation Association, the commission is an effort to examine the national parks today and chart a vision for their second century. It is led by former Sens. J. Bennett Johnston Jr. and Howard H. Baker Jr.

The commission consists of nearly 30 national leaders and experts, including scientists, historians, conservationists, academics, business leaders, policy experts and retired National Park Service executives.

The commission will hear from a range of experts, park managers and the general public during its 12-month work, culminating in a report with recommendations to Congress and the Obama administration in the fall.

"Yellowstone represents the birthplace of the national park idea," Johnston said. "At Yellowstone, we'll examine what that fundamental idea means for national parks today, and how it can shape a vision for the next century of the national parks."

The National Parks Second Century Commission first met in August 2008 at Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in California. It also met in October at Lowell National Historical Park in Massachusetts. The commission will meet in March at Gettysburg National Military Park in Pennsylvania and in June at Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee.

"Yellowstone National Park has been and remains the inspiration for so many who are interested in and dedicated to the preservation of our nation's public lands," park Superintendent Suzanne Lewis said. "We look forward to the lively and thoughtful discussions that will be taking place in this timeless setting."