

PEOPLE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Trailblazers: *Stepping Down But Not Out*

Name:	Fran Mainella
Title:	Former National Park Service Director
Member since:	1983

Fran Mainella promoted conservation as a vital human necessity, and outreach as a social standard. She breathed partnerships and preached volunteerism. And most recently, she touted park benefits from the director's chair of the National Park Service (NPS). She may have been the 16th person to hold the job, but was the first woman ever appointed to lead the agency.

Prior to her six years as NPS director, Mainella managed 155 Florida parks as Florida State Park Director and was the president of the Florida Recreation and Park Association, NRPA and the National Association of State Park Directors. Although she stepped gracefully from the limelight of the NPS on Oct. 17, she has not been idle. Mainella joined Clemson University in Clemson, S.C., as a visiting scholar to its Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management in early November.

Most proud moments: "I've had many proud moments as director of the National Park Service. When I see a smile on a visitor's face or when I see an employee, volunteer or partner working with visitors and knowing they have just helped them to create special memories, that makes me very proud.

One of my most poignant memories is of greeting people as they entered a park after Sept. 11, 2001. They were looking at parks as places of unity, hope and healing and were so thankful for the parks and their resources; it was an honor to be there for them.

Also, serving as NRPA president and opening our new office building was a proud day for all of us at NRPA and the nation."

Words of wisdom: "You are in the best career field in the country and the world. Our work in parks and recreation makes a difference for this and future generations. I'd also say that people entering the field should always work with partners, with communities and the public-to be committed to what I call civic engagement and public involvement."

Favorite saying: "Well, I always see the glass as half full, not half empty. Also that national parks are the soul of America and a gift to the world."

Influences: "Many people have served as mentors to me. In 1965, when I started in parks and recreation, a man named Peter Ledger, the head of parks and recreation in Groton, Conn., and a past NRPA trustee, influenced me. He's a friend and mentor to this day. Dr. Frances Cannon at Florida State University has also been a mentor. George Hartzog, the seventh director of the National Park Service, as well as all of the National Park Service directors who preceded me have had an influence on me—each in their own way. Although I never had the opportunity to meet him, Stephen Mather's writings, beliefs, style and actions have influenced my professional life."

Future of parks and recreation: "The future is outstanding because we reach so many people. We touch the lives of everyone in this country; we make sure resources are healthy and provide enjoyable experiences for visitors. Parks provide positive health benefits, conserve resources and are an economic driver for communities and the nation."



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