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The White House - USA Freedom Corps
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New Partnership Launched to Connect New Americans with Outdoor Volunteer and Recreation Activities

This Land is Your Land initiative encourages new Americans to get outdoors and volunteer

WASHINGTON, D.C. – USA Freedom Corps, American Recreation Coalition and the Homeland Security Task Force on New Americans today announced a new public-private partnership, *This Land is Your Land*, to engage more new Americans in volunteer and recreation opportunities, particularly in the great outdoors. A partnership convened by USA Freedom Corps, *This Land Is Your Land* mobilizes the resources and outreach efforts of government and the private sector to encourage new Americans to take pride in their country by engaging in volunteer service.

“It is our hope that through this new partnership, USA Freedom Corps can create an eagerness among new Americans to engage in volunteer opportunities in the great outdoors and to enjoy the grandeur of our National Parks,” said Alison Young, Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of USA Freedom Corps.

On the heels of Independence Day, today’s event honored the new citizenship of 20 individuals who took the Oath of Allegiance to become naturalized American citizens, administered by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services New York District Director Andrea Quarantillo. Upon naturalization, new citizens are granted the right to ownership of these federally managed lands and the shared responsibility to preserve these national treasures for generations to come. Mary Bomar, Director of the National Park Service and the first naturalized citizen to hold this position, delivered keynote remarks and offered a charge to the individuals welcomed as new Americans to take part in our National Parks, a lasting legacy to be cherished and shared among all Americans.

“There are special places that unite us all as Americans,” said Bomar. “National Parks are those special places, and by visiting them, I hope you will be as inspired as I was.”

Participating in today’s event, Cokie Roberts, member of the President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation; Alison Young, Special Assistant to the President for USA Freedom Corps; Mary Bomar, National Park Service Director and the first naturalized citizen responsible for the National Parks; Sam Solomon, President & CEO, Coleman Co., and other public- and private-sector leaders encouraging civic engagement among America’s newest citizens to help foster a greater sense of ownership in our Nation’s public lands.

During the event on Ellis Island, one of 391 National Park sites, *This Land is Your Land* partners announced ways to help new Americans to get outdoors, get active and volunteer. U.S. Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne, who oversees the National Park Service, announced on July 4th that citizens naturalized between now and National Public Lands Day on September 27, 2008, will receive free entrance to a National Park during the weekend of September 27-28, 2008.

Additionally, the American Recreation Coalition is working to engage corporate partners, such as the Coleman Company, in the initiative. President and CEO Sam Solomon announced today that Coleman will donate a 25 percent discount coupon to all newly naturalized citizens, as well as camping and other outdoor gear to various National Parks for these and other U.S. citizens to use during their visits.

“Every American shares a legacy of public lands and waters that cover one-third of the nation’s surface and offer special connections to our history, culture and beliefs,” Solomon said. “This is now part of your legacy. And by spending time in our parks and forests and refuges and other special places, you will enjoy physical and mental

and spiritual benefits.”

USA Freedom Corps encouraged the newly naturalized citizens to answer President Bush’s call for all Americans to serve their community and country. Cokie Roberts, member of the President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation, challenged them to volunteer 100 hours during their first year and citizens and strive to attain the President’s Volunteer Service Award.

In 2002, President Bush issued a national Call to Service and created USA Freedom Corps to help all Americans serve a cause greater than self. As a signature White House initiative, USA Freedom Corps works to foster a culture of service, citizenship and responsibility in America. USAFC promotes civic engagement volunteer service in America by partnering with national service programs, working to strengthen the non-profit sector, recognizing volunteers, and helping to connect individuals with volunteer opportunities. To learn more about the This Land is Your Land partnership or how to volunteer, visit www.volunteer.gov.

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