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Historic Tunnel View Overlook Makeover Completed in Yosemite National Park

***Secretary of the Interior Kempthorne Dedicates
First Centennial Initiative Project***

Yosemite, CA – With Yosemite National Park's granite monoliths as a backdrop, Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne today announced the completion of a much-needed makeover to the historic Tunnel View Overlook, the first project of the National Park Service Centennial Initiative.

“The rededication of this famous site shows that we can rise to the challenge of reinvigorating our national parks with stunning results,” said Secretary Kempthorne. “It is our hope that projects and vistas like this will inspire support and interest in preserving our national parks.”

Hundreds attended a ceremony to mark the completion of the overlook, a place photographed by thousands daily for its expansive views of Yosemite Valley, El Capitan, Bridalveil Fall, and Half Dome. Funding for the \$3.3 million restoration came from the nonprofit Yosemite Fund, which contributed \$1.8 million from over 2,000 donors, and \$1.5 million from the National Park Service. Today's celebration was modeled after the dedication marking the opening of the site in 1933 with vintage automobiles, an honor guard and a blessing by American Indians.

“Tunnel View is 75 years-old this year and it has never looked better. We're proud to be able to partner with organizations like The Yosemite Fund to rehabilitate this iconic view to the benefit of all park visitors,” said Yosemite National Park Superintendent Mike Tollefson. “It's a fitting way to celebrate the approaching 100th anniversary of the National Park Service and the 20th anniversary of The Yosemite Fund.”

The Tunnel View Overlook Rehabilitation Project features larger and safer viewing areas, unimpeded views, wheelchair accessibility, educational exhibits, a rebuilt trailhead, revamped parking areas, clearer circulation patterns for vehicles and pedestrians, and improved drainage. These issues were addressed while maintaining vistas and the naturalistic, rustic character and integrity of this historic site.

“This view truly depicts America the beautiful. The improvements reestablish the promise of inspiration to those who visit Tunnel View,” said Bob Hansen, president, The Yosemite Fund. “We're ecstatic that Tunnel View was the first project to be completed as part of the National Park Centennial Initiative.”

The National Park Centennial Initiative is a 10-year program to reinvigorate America's national parks and prepare them for a second century. The initiative includes a focus on increased funding for park operations plus a President's Challenge: up to \$100 million a year in federal funds to match \$100 million a year in philanthropic donations to the National Park Service.

The Tunnel View Overlook, also known as Discovery View, is located adjacent to the Wawona Road at the east portal of the Wawona Tunnel. It was constructed during an era that heralded a boom in design and development throughout the National Park Service, and helped initiate the National Park Service's "rustic" design style. Wawona Tunnel and Tunnel View were determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

The site remains one of the most popular scenic overlooks in Yosemite National Park. Tour buses, tram tours, and vehicles of every kind bring an estimated 5,000-7,000 people to the site per day during the height of the visitor season.

The National Park Centennial Initiative provides a framework for the National Park Service to engage the public in its mission. Its goals and strategies will embrace new constituents and gain support from a broad array of public and private partners to ensure America's national parks continue to thrive into the next 100 years.

Other 2008 Centennial Challenge programs and projects for Yosemite include:

- Junior Ranger Program at Happy Isles: This project will firmly establish a base for Junior Ranger program operations at the Happy Isles Nature Center by upgrading exhibits, providing an expanded curriculum of Junior Ranger programs, and increasing staffing and volunteers.
- Connect Underserved Youth to Parks and Evaluate Success: This multi-park project will provide diversity scholarships to underserved youth, and an evaluation of the project's success for three parks: Yosemite National Park, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and Olympic National Park. This educational program will build on a strong private partnership with Yosemite National Institute's campus affiliates, Yosemite Institute, Headlands Institute, and Olympic Park Institute.
- Nine national parks across the country, including Yosemite, will embark on a national effort to discover and catalog all plant and animal life in the national parks – technically speaking, they will conduct all *taxa biologic inventories*.

For a complete list of the 2008 National Park Service Centennial Challenge projects and programs please visit www.nps.gov/2016.

The Yosemite Fund is a nonprofit organization that provides broad-based private funding and resources for projects that preserve, protect or enhance Yosemite National Park. Since 1988, more than 100,000 individual, corporate and foundation donors have enabled the Fund to grant over \$50 million to complete over 200 projects in Yosemite. Contributors to the Fund provide a margin of excellence in Yosemite, extending a long-standing tradition of private philanthropy in National Parks. Results of the Fund's work on major projects can be seen most notably at the approach to lower Yosemite Falls (\$12.5 million), Glacier Point (\$4 million), Happy Isles (\$2 million) and Olmstead Point (\$1.2 million). Learn more at www.yosemitefund.org 1-800-4-MY-PARK.