**National parks.** The 63 national parks contain some of the country’s best-known natural attractions. They typically are large, diverse areas with outstanding natural features and ecological resources. They tend to be among the most strictly protected park units, in that Congress has historically been reluctant to authorize consumptive activities such as mining or hunting in the national parks.

**National monuments.** National monuments may be established by Congress or proclaimed by the President under the Antiquities Act of 1906. Many of the park system’s 84 national monuments contain historical or archaeological artifacts, but others are notable for their natural features or recreational opportunities.

**National preserves.** The 19 national preserves are similar to national parks in their size and natural features but *typically allow uses (such as hunting or oil and gas exploration) that Congress considered incompatible with national park designation*. Many preserves adjoin and share a name with a national park (e.g., Denali National Park and Preserve).

**National reserves.** The *two* national reserves are similar to national preserves except that *both are managed in partnership with state, local, or private entities*.

**National recreation areas.** NPS manages 18 national recreation areas. This designation originally was given to areas that surround Bureau of Reclamation reservoirs and feature water-based recreation; it has since been used for recreational units in or near urban centers. Activities such as boating, fishing, or hunting may be explicitly authorized in establishing legislation.

**National lakeshores and national seashores.** The 10 national seashores are on the Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific coasts, and the 3 national lakeshores are on the Great Lakes. Both recreation and natural resource preservation are prioritized in these units. A number of national seashores and lakeshores permit hunting.

**National rivers and wild and scenic rivers.** Under the Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR) Act of 1968, *Congress has preserved rivers in a free-flowing state* (unaltered by dams or channels). The National Park Service manages 10 wild and scenic rivers as stand-alone park units, and others as parts of broader units. Also, four national rivers or riverways were designated outside the WSR Act. The rivers offer hiking, canoeing, and other outdoor activities (sometimes including hunting).

**National trails.** Congress has established national trails under the National Trails System Act of 1968.7 NPS manages three national trails as full park units; all are designated as “national scenic trails” and wind through multiple states. The trails are managed for recreational use, primarily hiking. Other national scenic and historic trails are managed by NPS as parts of other units.

**National parkways.** The *four* national parkways encompass roads and surrounding parkland. Sites of cultural interest lie along their routes. The parkways were designed for recreational driving through scenic countryside, although the George Washington Memorial Parkway in Virginia has become a heavily used commuter route.

**National and international historic sites.** The 74 national historic sites and 1 international historic site designate places significant to U.S. history. Many are structures of historical interest, such as the homes of notable Americans, or buildings where important events occurred.

**National historical parks.** Like historic sites, the 63 national historical parks are notable for their connection with events or people of historical interest. These entities usually extend beyond a single building or property.

**National battlefields,** national battlefield sites, national battlefield parks, and national military parks. The 11 national battlefields, 1 national battlefield site, 4 national battlefield parks, and 9 national military parks all designate locations of significant military actions. They include landscapes where battles occurred (primarily during the American Revolution and the Civil War) and military and civil structures in those areas.

**National memorials.** National memorials need not be located at historically significant sites. Instead, many of the 31 national memorials, such as the Washington Monument or the Thomas Jefferson Memorial in Washington, DC, are *structures erected to commemorate people or events*.

**Other** designations. The National Park Service administers a number of areas in the Washington, DC, region that do not fit into the above classifications. The Park Service classifies these 11 units as having “other designations” than the standard types, and they bear a variety of names.

**ACTIVITY CATEGORIES**

LEISURE

Shopping,

Wildlife Watching

Food,

Guided Tours,

Playground,

NATURE

Astronomy,

Camping,

Hiking,

Fishing,

Horse Trekking,

SNOW

Dog Sledding,

Snow Play,

Snowshoeing,

Ice Skating,

Skiing,

SPORTS

Biking,

Golfing,

Team Sports,

Swimming

Water Skiing,

WATER

Boating,

Paddling,

Tubing,

SCUBA Diving,

Snorkeling,

ARTS

Arts and Culture,

Living History,

Museum Exhibits,

Park Film,

Hands-On,

EXTREME EXPLORING

Canyoneering,

Caving,

Climbing,

Compass and GPS

Hunting and Gathering,