

International Dark-Sky Association

The Nightscape Authority

since 1988”

“to preserve and protect the nighttime environment and our heritage of dark skies through quality outdoor lighting”

Press Release:

Utah’s Natural Bridges National Monument Becomes First International Dark Sky Park

April 19, 2007. Tucson, Arizona, U.S.A.

The International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) has designated Natural Bridges National Monument as its first International Dark Sky Park (IDSP) in a program recognizing exceptional commitment to dark sky preservation and restoration of public lands. IDSP was established in 2006 by IDA, a Tucson based 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to preserve and protect the nighttime environment. The park will be allowed to use the IDSP name and logo, identifying it as a leader in night sky protection and appreciation.

Natural Bridges National Monument, located in the sparsely populated southeastern corner of Utah, is notable for its lack of “light pollution.” Light pollution is any adverse effect of artificial light, including sky glow, glare, light trespass, light clutter, decreased visibility at night, and energy waste. It is commonly recognized as the brightening of the night sky that washes out the view of stars and the Milky Way. “This is one of the darkest national parks in the country,” says Chief Ranger Ralph Jones, referring to a comprehensive study of night sky quality conducted by the National Park Service.

IDA’s International Dark Sky Park program challenged Natural Bridges to minimize its own nocturnal impact and share its magnificent starry sky with the park’s 95,000 annual visitors. The park has retrofitted over 80% of their light fixtures, shielding them so all the light points downward. Most of these outdoor fixtures utilize 13-watt compact fluorescent light bulbs that provide ample light but prevent stray light from the visitor center and park ranger residences from interfering with the campground and backcountry. The park expects to complete upgrade of its lights in the next few months.

During the summer, the park provides astronomy ranger programs under spectacular starry skies. “Many park visitors are astounded when they first see the Milky Way under a dark sky. It isn’t just a faint smudge in the sky, but a bright, intricate river of light—almost three dimensional,” describes Ranger Jones of the edge-on view of our own galaxy.

Benefits of the park’s retrofit go beyond better stargazing. “Natural Bridges has reduced its operational costs and energy use by upgrading its outdoor lighting, created a better habitat for nocturnal wildlife, and improved visibility and safety at night,” remarks Superintendent Corky Hays. “I hope that our national parks can continue to provide a clear view of the heavens that so many of us have lost from our backyards.”

Further information on Natural Bridges National Monument and the National Park Service Night Sky Team is available at <http://www.nps.gov/nabr/> and <http://www2.nature.nps.gov/air/lightscapes/> or by contacting Chad Moore at 435-834-4904. IDA is accepting nominations for other International Dark Sky Park locations. For more information, please visit www.darksky.org.

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