



## **Utah Ensures National Parks Will Remain Open Despite Potential Government Shutdown**

*State officials are prepared to distribute up to \$5M to keep its Mighty 5® national parks open, making Utah the only state to lead a proactive effort of this scale*

**SALT LAKE CITY — NOV. 14, 2023** — With a potential government shutdown on November 17, federal government and National Park Service contingency plans call for all national parks to be closed should the government indeed shut down. However, Utah State Officials and the Utah Office of Tourism have other plans.

Utah has earmarked up to \$5 million to pay the full costs associated with the operation of the state's Mighty 5® national parks through one of the state's highest holiday visitation periods – Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the week surrounding each holiday. Funds will ensure full park operations including visitor centers; shuttles running as usual at Zion National Park, trash pickup and bathroom cleanup, and availability of permits for high visitation and backcountry destinations within each park.

Governor Spencer J. Cox said, "The federal government may be shutting down, but Utah's Mighty 5® national parks will be open and welcoming to visitors. Utah residents and international tourists alike seek winter adventures in these magical places, and we are planning to do right by all of them."

Utah's plan to keep national parks open and to support tourism, exploration and the vital role national parks play in the state's economy:

- According to the 2022 National Park Service Visitor Spending Effects Report, Utah is among the top three states in the U.S. for total economic output from national park visitor spending, with an astounding \$2.6 billion contribution to Utah's economy.
  - Utah's Mighty 5® national parks see on average 508,413 visitors in November, and 303,536 visitors in December (numbers represent averages across 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2023)
  - Utah's Mighty 5® national parks see an average of 16,947 visitors per day in November and nearly 10,000 visitors per day in December
- Utah also ranks among the top three states for jobs supported by national park economic output, with 23,300 livelihoods depending on the visitor economy. These are not just numbers; they represent the livelihoods of Utah's friends, family members, and neighbors.

"With a federal government shutdown looming, Utah is providing an early holiday present to national parks lovers: the certainty that they can have a full national park experience during peak holiday demand at any one of the Mighty 5® national parks, despite the pending federal government shutdown," said Vicki Varela, Managing Director of the Utah Office of Tourism.

In addition, Utah's 46 State Parks are open, staffed, and ready to welcome visitors.

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**About the Utah Office of Tourism:**

The Utah Office of Tourism's (UOT) mission is to elevate life in Utah through responsible tourism stewardship. We do this through marketing, stewardship, and development. Marketing: UOT curates messaging that inspires visitation, supports local businesses, and builds the Utah economy. Stewardship: UOT manages visitation statewide and supports the responsible discovery of Utah. Development: UOT partners with local communities to enhance and develop their visitor economies to benefit residents and visitors. Learn more at [visitutah.com](http://visitutah.com) and [travel.utah.gov](http://travel.utah.gov).