

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: **A Walk in the Park with David Vassar**

*A Film Retrospective Celebrating the work of David Vassar and the National Park Centennial
Presented by the Environmental Film Festival at the National Museum of American History*

Washington, DC (February 18, 2016) – In celebration of the National Park Centennial, the Environmental Film Festival presents a film Retrospective of Oscar®-nominated and Emmy®-winning writer and director, David Vassar. The program is sponsored by Subaru and free and open to the public. It will be presented at 3:30 PM on Saturday March 19 at the Warner Brothers Theater in the National Museum of American History.

Join David Vassar on an epic journey through some of the nation's most magnificent parks where he has written and directed more than a dozen films. The program features film clips as well as personal stories from David's lifetime of environmental filmmaking.

"We expect films about wilderness to be beautiful; after all, the subject abounds in beauty," said Alfred Runte, Ph.D., a National Parks historian and author of "[National Parks, the American Experience](#)" and "[Yosemite, the Embattled Wilderness](#)." "It is rather David's awareness of how wilderness acts as a cultural construct that sets his films apart. Against the argument that we have too much wilderness, he reminds us why we have never had enough," he said.



"It's been a wild ride," said David Vassar. "I've told stories about America's great National Parks, treasured and lost landscapes, and epic conservation battles. People will protect what they love, and documentaries bring the issues, people, wildlife and landscapes home. I hope we've made a difference; there's more to be done."

At the heart of Vassar's films is the attempt to strengthen the bond between people and nature, inviting them to become advocates for conservation. Vassar has reached millions of people in theaters, cable and broadcast television, international film festivals and National Park Visitor Centers. Vassar made his first documentary in Yosemite while still in college. After winning a student film festival, he was invited to screen the film for then National Park Service Director, George Hartzog. Later he was hired to lead evening programs for young Yosemite visitors for three summers. "[I had no idea at the time, I was 19-years old, but the course for much of my life had been set,](#)" said Vassar.

'GREEN' WHEN IT JUST ANOTHER COLOR

In 1974, Vassar wrote and directed *Replenish the Earth* for the Rock Creek Park Nature Center in Washington, DC. Like most of Vassar's films, *Replenish the Earth* was ahead of its time, advocating for everyday activities like ridesharing, recycling and water conservation, long before sustainability was even a word.

Vassar's first feature documentary, *Generation on the Wind* (1980) follows a group of young environmentalists, artists and backyard mechanics as they build a windmill to generate electricity on a remote island off the coast of Massachusetts. The film was nominated for an Academy Award. *River in Disguise* (1986) was the first film calling for the restoration of the long lost Los Angeles River and received five Emmy Awards. *Canyon Consort* (1987) traces the Paul Winter Consort on their musical journey through the Grand Canyon.

Spirit of Yosemite (2001) is the destination film that Vassar wrote and directed for Yosemite National Park. It was honored as "Best Special Venue Program" at the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival and presented for two consecutive years at the Cannes Film Festival as an "Outstanding Achievement in Digital Cinema." Since opening at the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center in 2001, the film has screened more than 60,000 times with an estimated audience of well over one-million people.

Save Our History – Yellowstone (2003) is a one-hour special for the History Channel that examines Yellowstone's current challenges set against the background of the park's history. *Discover Hetch Hetchy* (2006), an award-winning film hosted and narrated by Harrison Ford, served as the centerpiece for the Environmental Defense Fund campaign to restore the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park. Vassar's most recent film, *California Forever* (2012), which he wrote, directed and produced with Sally Kaplan, is a PBS television special that tells the story of California's magnificent state parks from 1864 to the present.

Vassar will also screen clips from *Conspiracy of Extremes*; a feature documentary which he and his partner Sally Kaplan are currently producing. The immersive documentary is a love song for one of the most forlorn and misunderstood regions in the world. Rather than a worthless and barren 'wasteland,' the desert will be portrayed as a wonderland teeming with remarkable life.

"Subaru is proud to sponsor this important film retrospective," said Alan Bethke, vice president of marketing for Subaru of America. "As we mark the hundredth year of National Parks, it is vital to celebrate the incredible impact of the Parks on our country, and to call attention to needed steps so they stay beautiful for the next hundred years."

[About Subaru of America, Inc.:](#) Subaru of America, Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of Fuji Heavy Industries Ltd. of Japan. Headquartered at a zero-landfill office in Cherry Hill, N.J., the company markets and distributes Subaru vehicles, parts, and accessories through a network of more than 620 retailers across the United States. [All Subaru products are manufactured in zero-landfill production plants, and Subaru of America, with the National Parks Conservation Association, has initiated a project to reduce waste in Yosemite, Grand Teton, and Denali National Parks.](#)

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[About Backcountry Pictures, Inc.:](#) Founded by David Vassar and Sally Kaplan in 2001, Backcountry Pictures creates powerful films and television programs that impart a sense of wonder about the natural world and inspire conservation and preservation.

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