

## *CBC session features National Parks for travel, climate adaptation*

Fort Lauderdale, FL - The Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Conference in Washington DC will feature the session “*Public Lands, Environment & Conservation: Peril & Opportunity for African Americans*” Wednesday, Sept. 16, noon- 2 p.m. Sponsored by Congressman Alcee Hastings of Florida, the session will showcase how our national parks, forests and other publicly owned lands can provide business opportunities for those in the travel market, improve the economy and aesthetics in our communities; reduce the numbers of people channeled into the prison system and buffer us against climate change while helping us restore health and viability.

Co-sponsors Rep. Corrine Brown, (FL) Rep. James Clyburn (South Carolina) and CBC Chair the Hon. G. K. Butterworth, (North Carolina,) represent districts with iconic national parks including the Everglades in Florida and the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor which runs from Jacksonville, NC to Jacksonville, FL. They are also on - or near - the Atlantic Ocean and are most vulnerable to rising sea levels.

“More than 290 million people from around the globe visit our national parks each year,” says Frank Peterman, session organizer. “The parks and forests are also a source of employment and careers and generate millions of dollars for surrounding communities. African Americans are only minimally involved in this sector and that needs to change if we are to fully participate in the benefits of our country’s natural assets.”

The session will also deal with how Black Communities can prepare for climate change. Ten years after Hurricane Katrina, in 2015 the US Army Corp of Engineers was found guilty by the courts of “gross negligence” for their failure to adequately design, build and maintain the levees that burst, swamping New Orleans. While the Corps is the chief agency responsible for managing flood

control projects in our country, it is *immune* from being sued by citizens that may be harmed by its decisions. Panelists at this session will present viable options to protect our communities from similar environmental disasters as a result of climate change.

Speakers will include Majora Carter, the MacArthur Genius Award winner who turned a \$10,000 grant from the USDA Forest into a \$3 million investment in the revitalization of her Hunts Point, Bronx neighborhood and Queen Quet, Chieftess of the Gullah Geechee Nation, who helped establish the Heritage Corridor and is leading adaptation to climate change in the Sea Islands.

Author Jarid Manos, founder of Great Plains Restoration Council in Fort Worth, TX whose programs divert people from prison into environmental work; Dorien Blythers, expert in community organizing and the green economy; Jacqui Patterson, Director of the NAACP's Environmental & Climate Justice Program and Aaron Mair, newly elected President of the Board of the Sierra Club with a 30-year history of environmental advocacy round out the panel. Moderator Frank Peterman is an expert of travel to the national parks, having visited more than 170 of more than 400 units.

Attendees will experience the public lands system and make connections with leaders at the exhibit, African Americans in the Great Outdoors which will be hosted by Black Meetings & Tourism Magazine in the Global Travel Pavilion. Contact Sue Cronin, Director Special Programs at 203.256.8402 or [SECronin@optonline](mailto:SECronin@optonline) for exhibiting details.