

## **MOTORWEEK**

### **YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK**

**JOHN DAVIS:** Some of America's most precious treasures are our national parks. And the U.S. park service understands that keeping the parks pristine, while also allowing easy access by vacationers is a huge challenge.

So, setting the pace on making the drive through the parks greener is not just a goal, it's a passion.

**JOHN DAVIS:** The National Parks Service is entrusted with preserving and showcasing America's natural wonders and historical landmarks, maintaining 392 national parks covering million acres of land and water in all parts of the country, and plays host to more than 275 million visitors every year.

No other place on earth has as much natural diversity and spectacular scenery in one accessible place than America's first national park, Yellowstone, so it's no surprise this is one of the world's most popular tourist destinations.

More than a million private vehicles and 3 million people traverse the park during the six months it's open every year. Yet the very act of admiring the scenery, or stopping for one of Yellowstone's infamous wildlife jams, those daily backups caused by elk, bison and bears blocking the road or just spotted nearby, is endangering the pristine environment that makes this place so special.

To combat the problem, the park service is committed to alternative fueled vehicles as a major part of their environmental stewardship program.

In fact, this biodiesel-powered 1995 Dodge Ram pickup was the National Park Service's first alt-fuel vehicle, and it's still in service at Yellowstone with over 200,000 miles on the clock.

As stakeholders in the Department of Energy's Clean Cities program, Yellowstone leads by example. All of their heavy vehicles run on biodiesel blends, up to B40 in the summer. The park fleet also contains a number of flex fuel E85 vehicles, advanced technology hybrids and a few small electrics.

But Park management is also looking to the past for inspiration.

**JIM EVANOFF:** Yellowstone had a very unique transportation operation prior to World War II and that was we had what were called old yellow buses. We had close to 400 of

these old yellow buses that would transport people as they got off the trains in Gardner and West Yellowstone and take them into the park.

And most importantly, there was a driver that was very well-educated and well-versed in interpreting all the park's features to the visitors. After World War II, Americans fell in love with the private automobiles and the station wagon, and nobody wanted to ride in these old yellow buses anymore and they were slowly put out of service.

**JOHN DAVIS:** Amazingly, at its peak, Yellowstone was the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest bus company in the nation, behind Greyhound.

Now, to reduce the volume of vehicles on the park's roads, Yellowstone has commissioned a small fleet of new biodiesel-powered yellow buses to use as employee shuttles and to serve as clean fuel ambassadors in nearby communities. The park has also acquired and refurbished 8 of the original old yellow buses and has put them back in service, once again giving guided tours in portions of the park.

Yellowstone is not as well suited to mass transit as other national parks, though. Parks with limited access or a single tourist attraction can more easily corral visitor's cars in one place and make use of shuttles.

Glacier National Park's famous vintage red tour buses are still in daily use plying visitors over the Road to the Sun, and they were retrofitted a number of years ago to run on clean propane, while modern tour buses in Mammoth Cave National Park and others around the country are running on clean alternative fuels as well.

**JIM EVANOFF:** It's just not alternative fuels, but also looking at more green procurement, we're looking at water conservation opportunities, renewable energy such as from the sun or falling water.

**JOHN DAVIS:** Other park programs, like recycling and composting, and a new partnership with Michelin to test low-rolling resistance tires, all tie together to reduce vehicle use, lower emissions and save fuel. And the National Park Service hopes the influence of their good example extends beyond the park gates.

**JIM EVANOFF:** The average stay of a visitor in Yellowstone is a little more than 1.5 days. That's the amount of time we have to educate and promote and have them understand our environmental programs and what they can do while they're here and when they go home to do the same kind of promotion of sustainability that we're doing here in the park.

**JOHN DAVIS:** And that's a lesson we'd all do well to learn.