

**The Clemson University Institute for Parks  
Annual George B. Hartzog, Jr. Lecture Series**

Presents



**The Honorable David Vela**

Deputy Director, exercising the authority of the Director  
of the National Park Service (NPS)

**NPS Next: A Second Century of Service**

Tuesday, October 22, 2019

2:00 pm

Brooks Center for the Performing Arts Auditorium

## **NPS Next: A Second Century of Service**

On September 30, 2019, the Honorable David Vela, a 29-year career veteran of the National Park Service (NPS), was named Deputy Director, exercising the authority of the Director of the National Park Service. He had been serving as Deputy Director of Operations since April. Vela previously served as superintendent of Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway from March 2014 to April 2019. Vela managed more than 310,000 acres of park lands, including the spectacular Teton Range that serves as home to iconic wildlife from bison to grizzly bears as well as 51 miles of the wild and scenic Snake River.

Prior to assuming his Grand Teton post, Vela served as associate director for Workforce, Relevancy and Inclusion in the NPS Washington headquarters where he administered a \$32 million dollar operational budget with 153 employees, and served as a key advisor to the NPS Director and Deputy Director on the full spectrum of strategic Human Capital Management issues, initiatives, and policies. His national program areas included: Human Resources, Learning and Development, Equal Opportunity, Youth, and the Office of Relevancy, Diversity & Inclusion.

Before his time in Washington, Vela served for over four years as director of the NPS Southeast Region, where he oversaw 66 national park sites in nine states, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. Vela administered multi-million dollar projects, including an operational budget in excess of \$230 million dollars. In addition, he provided product and leadership support for the Department/NPS National Latino Heritage Initiative, served as Co-Chair for the NPS Civil War 150th Commemoration National Steering Committee, and served on the NPS Development Advisory Board and NPS National Leadership Council Executive Committee.

Vela began his NPS career in 1981 as a cooperative education student at San Antonio Missions National Historical Park in Texas, and later became a permanent park ranger. From 1987 to 1998, Vela worked in a variety of federal posts outside the NPS. He was a special agent in the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Inspector General's Office, conducting white-collar criminal investigations in New York and New Jersey. He was also a special assistant for Hispanic affairs to the late U.S. Rep. George Thomas "Mickey" Leland of Texas. He was a federal investigator for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. In 1996, the Texas Attorney General appointed Vela director of the Texas Child Support Program, where he supervised more than 70 field offices and 2,400 employees.

Upon his return to the National Park Service, Vela held park superintendent positions at Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site (Texas), Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park (Texas), and the George Washington Memorial Parkway (Washington, DC and VA/MD Area).

Vela is a graduate of Texas A&M University, with a Bachelor of Science degree in recreation and parks. He graduated from the U.S. Department of the Interior Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program in May 2006. Vela is the recipient of numerous awards both within and outside of the National Park Service for leadership and performance excellence. He and his wife, Melissa, have two children, Christina and Anthony, and six grandchildren.