

## National Mall upgrades to propane mowers

One-third of the park division's mower fleet has changed over from diesel, thanks to a PERC donation. BY MARISA PALMIERI

**M**ore than 24 million people visit the National Mall each year, and the Propane Education & Research Council (PERC) is betting that more than a few of those visitors will notice the shiny, new propane-fueled mowers maintaining the high-profile grounds.

On June 24 PERC donated six Exmark Lazer Z S-Series lawn mowers with Kohler Command Pro Propane EFI engines to the National Mall and Memorial Parks (NAMA), a division of the National Park Service. NAMA encompasses the Mall and many of the national memorials around Washington.

The donation amounts to approximately \$70,000 in equipment.

"This is an opportunity to showcase this technology in a place where millions of people come every year," said Roy Willis, PERC president and CEO, after a ribbon-cutting ceremony outside the Thomas Jefferson Memorial. "We hope some decision makers see these propane mowers and ask the question, 'Why can't we do this back home?'"

The four 72-in. and two 60-in. Lazer Z S-Series propane-fueled zero-turn riders will comprise one-third of the Mall's mower fleet and replace diesel-fueled mowers. PERC selected these models for the donation because they are the first to employ Kohler's Command Pro Propane EFI engine—a technology that was developed and com-



A National Park Service employee takes a newly donated propane mower for a spin near the Thomas Jefferson Memorial on June 24.

mercialized through PERC funding.

The combined deployment of the mowers and two electric vehicles, also donated at the ceremony, added NAMA to the list of national parks advancing the Green Parks Plan, a National Park Service initiative to reduce dependence on foreign oil, mitigate the effects of climate change and conserve energy.

"We are always looking for ways to integrate sustainable practices into every part of our operation," said Bob Vogel, National Mall and Memorial Park superintendent. "The electric cars and generous donation of propane mowers from PERC will help the

National Mall meet its sustainability goals with a clean-burning, American-made fuel."

Switching to propane mowers is expected to lower carbon monoxide emissions by 80 percent compared with gasoline, reduce fuel spills and save NAMA money on fuel and maintenance costs, PERC says. Kohler estimates its engine increases fuel efficiency by 25 percent compared to a carbureted gasoline engine and also reduces overall mower operating costs.

The mowers will be refueled using a propane cylinder exchange system from Thompson Gas.