



MADE IN AMERICA

Investing in National Parks for Our Heritage and Our Economy



“Our national parks are economic generators, each year attracting millions of visitors, many from overseas, and provide great benefit to our national and local economies. We must protect and strengthen our investment in this valuable resource.

To do otherwise would be penny-wise and pound-foolish.”

—MICKEY ROBBINS
PATTEN AND PATTEN, INC.
INVESTMENT ADVISORY SERVICES
CHATTANOOGA, TN

“Outdoor recreation, tourism, and our outdoor industry are driving a sustainable, American economy. By drawing millions of people into the outdoors and encouraging active lifestyles, well-run, diverse, and adequately funded national parks are essential investments in the \$730 billion active outdoor economy and in jobs.”

— WILL MANZER, CEO OF
EASTERN MOUNTAIN SPORTS

With the National Park Service 2016 centennial in mind, 85% of voters surveyed favor giving national parks enough funding so they are fully restored and ready to serve the public for the next 100 years.

SOURCE: HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES
POLL CONDUCTED JUNE 2-5, 2010



www.npca.org

NOVEMBER 2011

Cover: Yosemite National Park.
©Scott Kirkwood/NPCA

Right: The Vietnam Veterans
Memorial. ©Getty Images





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Yellowstone, Gettysburg, the Statue of Liberty and the Flight 93 Memorial are among the many national parks that we, as Americans, own together. Keeping this magnificent collection of places well-managed and open to everyone costs less than 1/13th of one percent of the federal budget—quite a bargain for a park system that inspires visitors from around the world and produces nearly 270,000 private sector jobs across the country.

Yet for the second year in a row, America's national parks face an erosion of funding necessary to serve the public and protect park resources. And in today's dollars, the overall appropriation for the National Park Service (NPS) is nearly \$400 million (or 13%) less than it was 10 years ago. Not only will this mean fewer rangers to greet us, help us plan our visits, and respond to emergencies, but it also means that parks won't be adequately maintained, resources will suffer damage, wildlife will be more vulnerable to poachers, and development threats will increase.

Left: Delicate Arch at sunset with many tourists, Arches National Park.
©Jf123/Dreamstime.com

“Concessioners provide lodging, food services, gifts and souvenirs, equipment rentals, transportation and other visitor services in more than 100 national park units. Our annual sales of \$1.1 billion provide 25,000 jobs and some \$100 million in franchise fees and other payments to the National Park Service. But for our businesses to succeed, adequate NPS funding for trails, visitor centers and more is essential.”

— KEVIN KELLY, PRESIDENT
DELAWARE NORTH COMPANIES
PARKS AND RESORTS, INC.
BUFFALO, NY

Resource impairment issues are already notable across the park system, and further budget tightening doesn't bode well for cataloging, protecting, and interpreting the national park resources that are stewarded by and for the American people. Adequate funding and staffing can be the solution to these issues.

For example, the Indian Arts Museum at Grand Teton was just closed due to incapacity to care for nearly 1,500 artifacts that have now been indefinitely removed from public display. Poor climate control, insects and rodents were damaging this outstanding collection. The cost to refurbish these items could approach \$1 million, and in this funding climate, there is great uncertainty about when a new facility can be built. As reported in the press, “the fate of the Vernon Collection offers a prime example of what's at stake.” While the collection is now housed in a curatorial facility with appropriate climate and pest controls, it is 1,000 miles away from home and not on public display, all but inaccessible to the visitors and researchers at Grand Teton.

In FY 2011, funding for the National Park Service was reduced by nearly \$140 million, including an \$11.5 million reduction for operations. In tight budget times, it's reasonable for the National Park Service to operate frugally. But thrifty operation isn't enough to keep parks solvent: national parks today receive just 82 cents for every dollar they need to pay for the rangers who are fulfilling the experience of millions of annual visitors and protecting the parks' treasures. And

threats are mounting: according to the recently-enacted Budget Control Act of 2011, if Congress is unable to agree on a level of spending and revenue that reduces the budget, programs from defense to national parks will be subject to a budgetary sequester—which means national park budgets could be cut by as much as 9%.

As this report shows, cuts equal to or even half that amount would be disastrous for many national parks:



- Seasonal rangers, who ensure that visitors have the safe and enjoyable experience they seek, could virtually disappear;
- Emergency response times in many areas could increase;
- Some parks could be forced to close campgrounds, visitor centers, or other services;
- School groups would face the prospect of being turned away, denying schoolchildren the tremendous, educational value of parks and historic sites;
- Visitor centers' hours of operation could shrink, and outreach to surrounding communities and at-risk youth would likely be scaled back;
- A shortage of law enforcement staff would leave archaeological and paleontological resources poorly protected from looters, and animals and plants exposed to poachers;
- Reductions in rangers could encourage an increase of trafficking and growing of illegal drugs in some national parks;
- Museum collections in several parks would continue to languish out of the public eye and, at times, under storage conditions that threaten priceless artifacts;
- Monitoring of endangered species and other scientific work likely would be delayed or dropped;
- And ultimately, many visitors to the parks, including international tourists who spend their money in businesses that provide thousands of jobs, might choose to go somewhere else.

Left: Children enjoy a hands-on activity in Acadia NP. ©Ray Radigan/NPS. **Top Right:** Dedication of the Museum of the National Park Ranger at Norris (mounted rangers with Lorraine Mintzmeyer). ©Jim Peaco/NPS.

NPS by the Numbers



Number of recreational visits in 2010: **281 million**

Portion of American voters polled who have visited a national park: **9 in 10**

States containing units of the National Park Service: **49**

Percentage of voters surveyed who favor giving national parks enough funding so they are fully restored and ready to serve the public for the next hundred years: **85%**

Federal budget in 2010: **\$3.7 trillion**

National Park Service discretionary budget in 2010: **\$2.75 billion**
(.074%, or 1/13th of 1% of the total)

National Park Service discretionary budget in fiscal year 2002
(in 2011 dollars): **\$3 billion**

National Park Service discretionary budget in fiscal year 2011:
\$2.6 billion (a \$387 million, 13% decline)

Amount of economic value to the public for each \$1 invested
in our national parks: **\$4**

Number of private-sector jobs generated annually by national parks: **267,000**

Direct annual contribution of national parks to the economy: **\$13.2 billion**
(much more when adding related, indirect spending)

National park operations shortfall: **\$500 to \$600 million**

Deferred maintenance backlog: **\$10.8 billion**

Critical systems deferred maintenance backlog: **\$3.7 billion**

Land acquisition backlog: **roughly \$2 billion**

Number of jobs generated for each million dollars invested in park
construction: **14 to 16**

Decline in park service maintenance (construction budget)
since Fiscal Year 2002 (in 2011 dollars): **60%**

Number of commissioned permanent park rangers in 1980: **1,841**

Number of commissioned permanent park rangers in 2010:
1,417 (a 23% decline)

Number of seasonal rangers in 1980: **616**

Number of seasonal rangers in 2010: **511** (a 17% decline)

“Many parks have huge numbers of vacant positions that they can’t fill [due to budget constraints]. When you don’t have the people, you can’t do the job. We’re no longer cutting fat; we’re cutting muscle and bone.”

— RICHARD B. SMITH,
MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
OF THE COALITION OF NATIONAL
PARK SERVICE RETIREES,
AS QUOTED IN THE PRESS,
OCTOBER 2011

“I live in Houston, TX and don’t have a lot of money, but I save as much as I can to visit as many National Parks as possible...I must also say that the park rangers make the whole experience even more memorable. They are always so knowledgeable, helpful, polite and considerate—what an awesome job they have, and they do it so well...We must preserve our National Parks for generations to come, and if anyone doesn’t understand that, they haven’t visited a National Park.”

— NPCA SUPPORTER, 2011

Right: A family vacation at Red Rock, Zion National Park. ©Tetra Images/Alamy.
RIGHT PAGE (Top): Members of the Cococino Rural Environmental Corps repair trails in Grand Canyon National Park. Photo courtesy of Cococino Rural Environmental Corps. **(Bottom Left):** Couple in Joshua Tree NP. ©Ian Shive.
(Bottom Right): Volunteers from Dover Air Force Base straighten up a cemetery at Gettysburg NP. ©Angel DeJesus/NPS.

Even if our parks avoid an across-the-board budgetary meat-axe, they remain at risk of similar cuts occurring in slow motion, depending on the priorities of Congress and the administration.

This report examines what this challenging budget climate means for the National Park System as a whole, and takes a detailed look at some of the system’s most beloved and most challenged parks.

We examined publicly available budget information; talked to NPS officials and retirees, park advocates and other experts; and used information obtained from park service reports and Congress (through the Freedom of Information Act). We investigated many parks at which even a five percent cut would mean no money at all for seasonal

rangers, who interpret and monitor resources and enforce regulations during high-visitation periods. We researched parks that are already delaying or not filling permanent positions—and have seen the impact of such actions already at parks—and looked at parks that may have to shut down their educational outreach. We learned of a park where the odometers on the vehicle fleet average more than 100,000 miles and the maintenance equipment is so old that its safety is questionable.

Despite a serious, bipartisan effort by Congress and two administrations to address chronic underfunding—an effort that has been on hold for at least the last two years—federal policymakers are still not meeting the needs of most national parks. In real dollars, the current National Park Service budget is



more than \$385 million below where it was in 2002. In the current budget climate, it may fall further behind.

The reality is that funding our National Park System and Service is a drop in the bucket compared to the overall federal budget. But as they make critically important budget decisions, Congress and the administration need to recognize how important that drop is. National parks include some of the most awe-inspiring places on Earth:

- cathedrals of natural splendor;
- monuments to human inspiration and struggle;
- seashores, prairies, and rushing mountain rivers that refresh our spirits.

Their connections to our past—our mistakes and our triumphs—remind and teach us about our heritage and the journey that turned the United States into one of history's greatest civilizations.

And when American families are struggling to find jobs and pay the bills, they need and deserve these places of respite, the affordable, inspiring domestic vacations parks provide and the hundreds of thousands of jobs they create. As

Washington policymakers seek to reduce our national debt in the long-term, they should understand healthy national parks not as cost centers, but as economic engines, civic necessities, and sources of American pride and inspiration.

National parks are worthy investments—in jobs, our economy, our quality of life and our children—that pay dividends far beyond their miniscule cost in a total federal budget of more than \$3 trillion.

“We can create 1.3 million American jobs by 2020 just by restoring the U.S. share of the travel market to its 2000 level.”

— U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, OPEN LETTER TO CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, SEPTEMBER 5, 2011

**According to Forbes,
national parks comprise eight of the top 25 U.S. tourist destinations**







FINDINGS

Park visitation has topped 281 million the last two years. Yet, based on analysis by the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), our treasured parks received \$500 to \$600 million less than they needed to staff visitor centers, teach people about the natural and cultural wealth owned by all Americans, protect those precious resources, and assure visitors' safety.

This past spring, Congress and the Obama administration avoided a government shutdown by agreeing to a fiscal year 2011 federal budget that included a cut of nearly \$140 million from the National Park Service budget.

Further cuts are likely in FY 12, with additional cuts proposed by both the House and Senate. Additionally, the 10-year budget caps enacted as part of this summer's debt limit compromise set the stage for continued cuts, depending on the annual decisions made by Congress and the administration. The resulting decay in park funding over a period of years, or a near-term across-the-board cut of 5-10%, could devastate park programs—including the ability to protect resources and serve visitors—and result in the substantial loss of staff, either through a reduction in force or other means.

Left: Hiker taking in the beautiful view, Appalachian Trail.
©Richard Mirro/ISTOCKPHOTO

"...it was abundantly clear that rangers are an endangered species...Restrooms were falling apart and inadequate to meet demand. And so on. Really a sad commentary on our great Park System!"

— JAMES B. ROCHESTER, WASHINGTON, 2004, WHEN OPERATING BUDGETS WERE LOW

Recent polling shows that more than nine out of ten Americans have visited a national park and more than six out of ten have done so in the last two years; these patterns remain across demographics and political persuasion.

— SOURCE: HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES, JUNE 2010

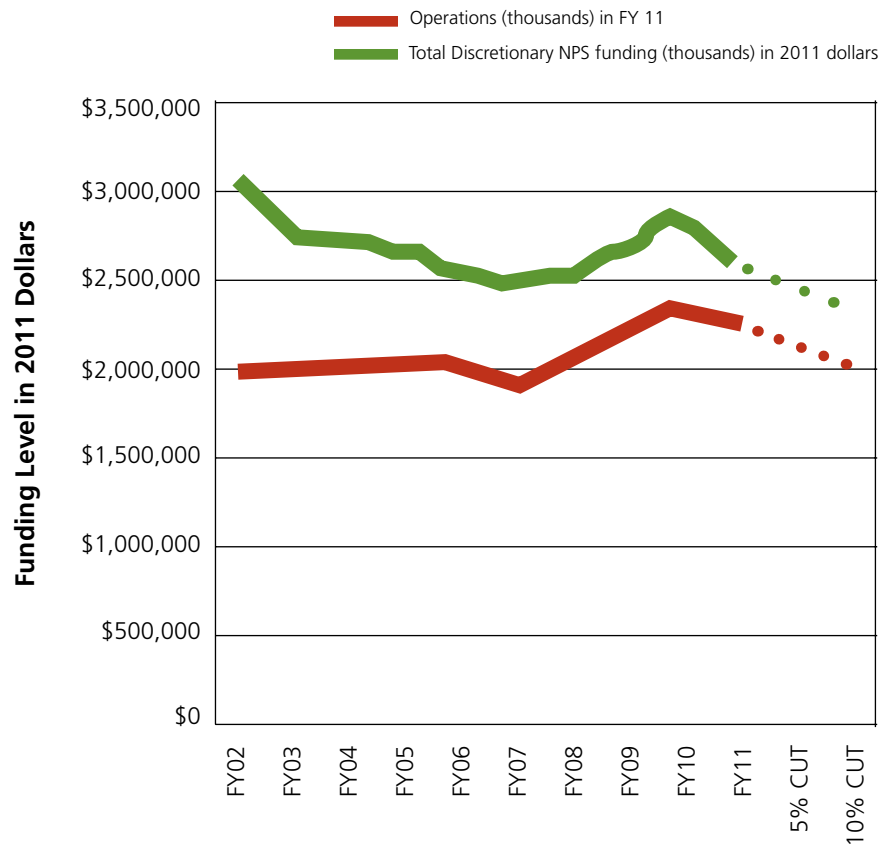
"Adequate funding is the graveyard of many great ideas. Even during our toughest times, such as the Great Depression, investments in our national parks have always been one of our highest priorities."

— NATIONAL PARKS SECOND CENTURY COMMISSIONER TONY KNOWLES, FORMER GOVERNOR OF ALASKA, 2009 AS QUOTED IN THE PRESS

As this report demonstrates, this level of cuts would severely damage park managers' ability to provide visitor services and protect our national treasures from damage. And cuts to park operations, construction and land acquisition would mean direct job losses, a loss of the indirect spending associated with these investments, and substantially increased development threats within the borders of our national parks.

According to the National Park Service, its existing budget for construction and cyclic maintenance is already \$325 million short of the amount necessary to maintain park sewer systems, roofs, foundations and road surfaces. At this point, there is literally nothing left to cut in park budgets without causing harm. Budgets can only be eroded so much before parks are squeezed irreparably.

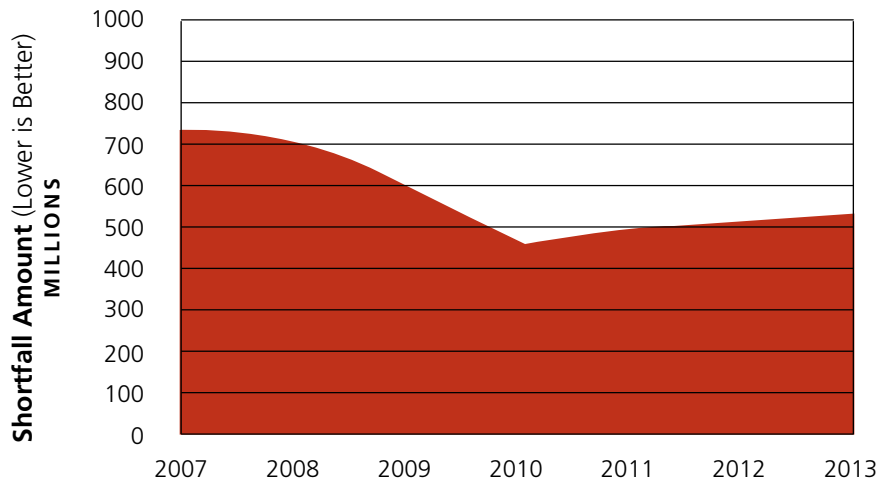
Inflation-adjusted Ten-Year NPS Funding and Projected Impacts of 5-10% Cuts



In real dollars, the discretionary budget for our national parks today is more than \$385 million less than it was a decade ago. The level of cuts likely if there is an across-the board sequestration of discretionary funds would send the overall national parks budget to its lowest level in more than a decade. The park operations budget would—in real terms—approximate funding levels when park funding shortfalls reached crisis proportions.

**Estimated Shortfall in
Park Operations
Park Unit Funding**

(Appropriations Flat
in 2012 & 2013)

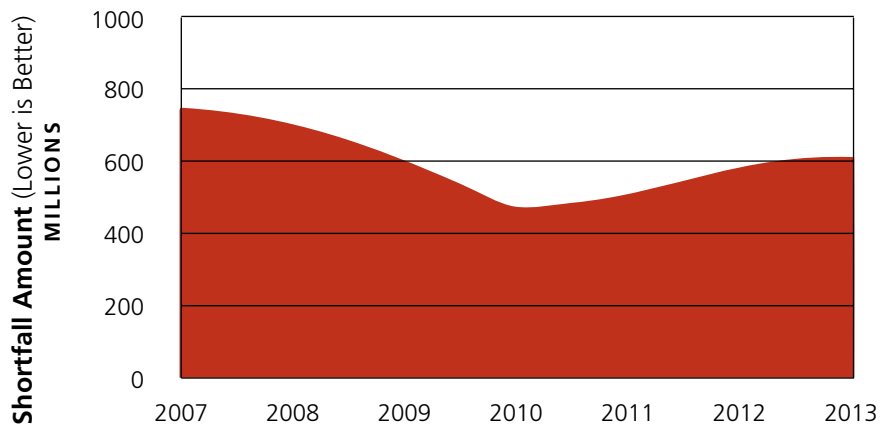


These graphs demonstrate the recent reduction in the operating shortfall in the national parks budget and the projected increase in the shortfall with a flat budget because of fixed costs to absorb. A projected 5% or 10% funding cut would begin to quickly erode recent successes and send our parks back to the time of "endangered rangers."

NOTE: The operations shortfall describes the amount of money that, on an annual basis, the National Park Service lacks in order to fully carry out park operations at a level that is considered adequate. To make up for the shortfall, Congress would need to appropriate the amount of the shortfall in addition to current funding levels, on an annual basis.

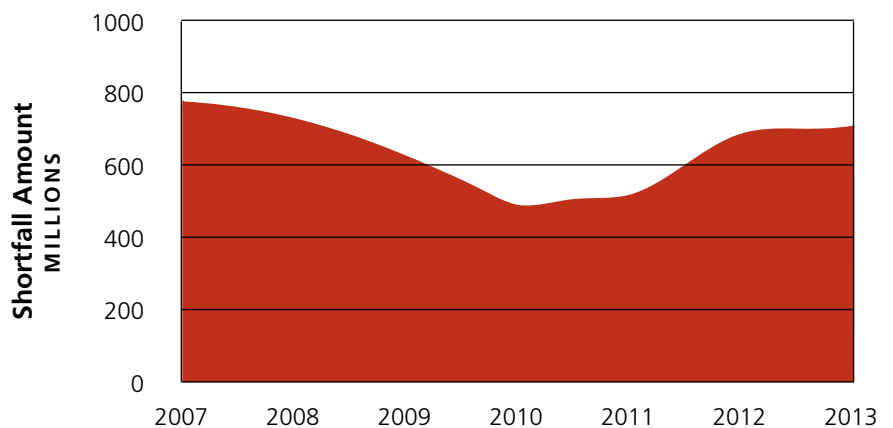
**Estimated Shortfall in
Park Operations
Park Unit Funding**

(Appropriations Cut 5%
in 2012 & Flat in 2013)



**Estimated Shortfall in
Park Operations
Park Unit Funding**

(Appropriations Cut 10%
in 2012 & Flat in 2013)



The Deferred Maintenance Backlog: Cutting Construction = Cutting Jobs



The National Park Service's deferred maintenance backlog summarizes the total cost of outstanding or unfinished projects related to construction and maintenance of facilities. The backlog includes wastewater treatment, trail maintenance, facility upgrades, and other projects needed to protect visitor safety and ensure a quality visiting experience and the protection of natural and cultural resources. The last reported backlog was \$10.8 billion, an increase over prior years. Of this, \$3.7 billion is estimated to apply to "critical systems"—items essential to the park's function. While it may be unrealistic to do every needed repair contributing to the full backlog, it's critical to keep up with this critical systems backlog to address the basic functioning of our parks and the safety of visitors.

"I had occasion to spend five days visiting and staying in Yellowstone National Park. I was awed and inspired by the majesty of the park, the magic of its geysers, waterfalls and colorful hot springs and the magnificent creatures that call the park their home. One does not need to go to the African Serengeti. You just need to go to Yellowstone..."

— THERESA P., ATHENS, GEORGIA

The longer critical maintenance is put off, the more difficult and expensive the work becomes, and the more deterioration and damage occurs to historic buildings, popular trails, and the natural surroundings the parks are meant to protect. In a recent exchange with Congress, the National Park Service indicated its annual funding for maintenance and construction falls about \$325 million short of the amount necessary to prevent the maintenance backlog from growing further.

Addressing this backlog directly produces jobs, some of which are subcontracted to firms in surrounding communities. The National Park Service estimates that 14 to 16 jobs are created for each million dollars invested in the park construction budget. That is certainly on the upper end of job creation when examining standard economic multipliers. And the secondary impact of construction spending benefits local communities where workers spend their paychecks.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act allowed the Park Service to address more than \$500 million of its documented deferred maintenance: projects at Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks included road resurfacing, new maintenance buildings, a wastewater treatment plant and a hydroelectric power plant.

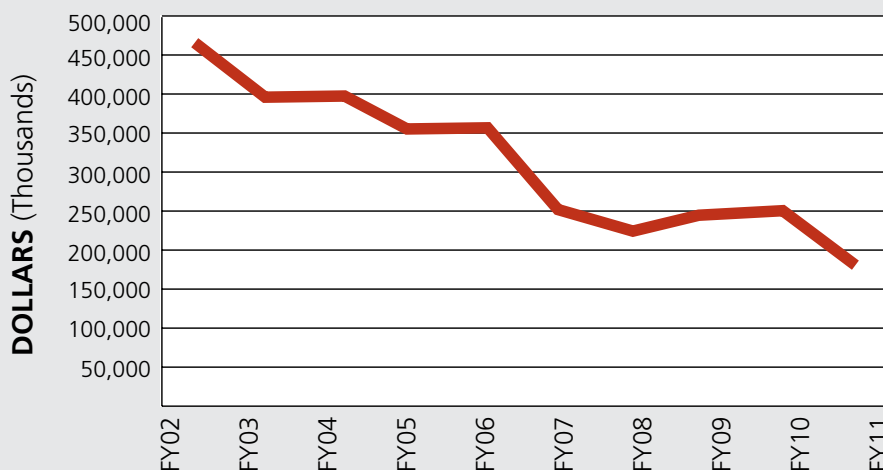
But more work remains: A look at the top ten park units with the largest deferred maintenance backlogs provides insight into the scope and diversity of needs.

At Grand Canyon National Park, more than \$16 million is needed to ensure visitors receive safe drinking water, more than \$4 million is needed to rehabilitate the popular Bright Angel Trailhead area, and more than \$2 million is needed to rehabilitate the Grand Canyon Lodge kitchen. At Gateway National Recreation Area, the fourth most visited national park unit with nearly 9 million annual visitors, more than \$5 million is needed to repair and stabilize the historic Battery Weed Seawall and nearly \$3 million is needed to replace sanitary sewer lines at Breezy Point to protect beach recreation and wildlife habitat. More than \$10 million is needed to repair a ferry dock, and almost \$6 million is needed to rehabilitate historic park headquarters for resource protection, safety and sustainable design.

And at Yellowstone National Park, at least \$15 million is needed to replace water and wastewater facilities. Other unmet needs include repairing road guardrails and other road repairs, resurfacing roads for visitor safety, and improvements to and reconstruction of visitor facilities.

Inflation-Adjusted NPS Construction Funding

— NPS Construction Account in 2011 Dollars (thousands)



These needs represent a small portion of the improvements needed to adequately protect our national treasures. Yet despite this enormous backlog, Congress and the administration are cutting construction funds, 75% of which are spent on the maintenance backlog. The FY11 appropriations bill cut nearly \$50 million from the account, including rescinding \$25 million that had not yet been obligated to specific projects; this total cut is equivalent to 20% of the prior year's construction budget. Congressional consideration of the FY11 bill also included multiple amendments—filed but not introduced—seeking to entirely zero out the construction account. And as part of the FY12 budget and appropriations process, the president, House and Senate have all proposed deep cuts to this account, which has fallen by 60% over the last decade in real dollars.

Facility maintenance is also done by staff funded through the operations account, which is equally important for addressing maintenance needs. Cuts to operations can mean undermining repair and rehabilitation of park facilities. More adequate operations funding ensures the seasonal and permanent staff who not only serve visitors, but also maintain facilities and prevent the backlog from growing further.

Further challenging already constrained park budget is the need to absorb nearly \$37 million in damages stemming from Hurricane Irene and other natural disasters.

The park service is seeking to prioritize scarce maintenance dollars. A recent park service planning document, *A Call to Action*, highlighted “investing wisely” as one of more than 35 actions to improve our parks without additional funds. The strategy calls for correcting deferred maintenance deficiencies in the top 25% of facilities most important to the visitor experience and resource protection.

Left Page: Photo by Sean Smith/NPCA. **Top Right:** MacNeil Lyons leading bear interpretation at Canyon Visitor Center. ©Jim Peaco/NPS. **Bottom Right:** Kevin Topping with Expedition Yellowstone! Group viewing Canary Spring at Mammoth Terraces. ©NPS.

“Families have their once-in-a-lifetime vacations at Yellowstone National Park. They enjoy the bubbling mud pots, gushing waterfalls and amazing geysers. The boardwalks, roads and trails that make these experiences possible don’t take care of themselves—they need constant maintenance. We need to make sure every visitor, every day has an unforgettable experience. Taking care of Yellowstone and other crown jewels is good for visitors and good for business.”

— BILL BERG, PRESIDENT OF THE GARDINER CHAMBER,
GARDINER MONTANA



Despite concerns about the economy and the federal budget, 88% of Americans say it is extremely or quite important to protect and support our national parks. The percentage of voters who feel strongly about this is actually higher than in 2008, before the economic downturn. Few issues enjoy such widespread agreement and bipartisan support among the American people.

For many, parks provide not just recreation, but a livelihood. Parks' local communities depend on them economically. It would be shortsighted to undermine the very places that contribute to local economies and foster jobs, particularly as American

families struggle with the painful impacts of the recession.

America has faced difficult economic times before, and will again. For example, during WWII, when there was pressure to use national park resources for consumptive uses, we resisted; instead, we elected as a nation to preserve our national parks for the values we so cherish—in good times and in bad. In the rush to reduce the deficit, we must not impair the National Park Service's ability to preserve these places that define our national identity, so that future generations know who we are and where we come from.

Budget Basics

As NPCA President Tom Kiernan told congressional appropriators in March, 2011, "A National Park System that is well managed, with park personnel who are well-trained, park resources that are protected, and visitors who are safe and well-served, requires investments by Congress." But for more than a decade, the park system has gone without hundreds of millions of dollars annually needed to achieve those goals. Individual parks have watched their buying power erode as management responsibilities and fixed costs increased faster than funding levels.

The FY11 National Park Service Cuts at a Glance



The Park Service's FY11 spending plan reflects nearly \$140 million in cuts to programs from prior year levels. With a budgetary agreement creating pressure to cut more than a trillion dollars in discretionary spending, these cuts could continue next year and potentially grow much worse starting in FY13, depending on the supercommittee process due to conclude this month.

THE TOP FY11 CUTS:

Operations: As discussed in this report, the operations account was cut by more than \$11.5 million, a cut that has to be absorbed in park service budgets due to the reality of fixed costs.

Construction: The construction account was cut by nearly \$50 million, which will only fuel the nearly \$11 billion deferred maintenance backlog.

Land Acquisition Cut by More than

One-Third: The Federal Land program of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) protects national parks from incompatible development on private land within park borders. The program has been recommended as central to the National Park Service moving forward with its mission by numerous reports including the *National Parks Second Century Commission* report and NPCA's recent

The State of America's National Parks report. This program draws from a dedicated account that uses a small portion of offshore drilling receipts to allow the Park Service and other agencies to purchase lands from willing sellers.

The Department of the Interior estimates that the \$214 million spent on land acquisitions in 2010 returned more than double that investment, supporting an estimated \$442 million in economic activity and about 3,000 jobs.

Last year, LWCF was cut by more than \$31 million for the National Park Service, a 36% reduction. As a result, there are

In 2004, NPCA studied the budget of the National Park Service and found that, on average, parks were operating on two-thirds of the funding needed. By fiscal year 2007, the operational shortfall exceeded \$750 million for the system. As a result, parks across the country faced critical staff shortages, forcing them to curtail visitor services and cut back on resource protection.

In fiscal year 2008, prompted by the encouragement of NPCA and others, Congress and the Bush administration made a commitment to increase the NPS budget by \$100 million above unavoidable cost increases (i.e., fixed costs) in

each of the following ten years, intending to provide parks with the funding and staffing needed to improve the condition of parks in preparation for the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service in 2016. The National Parks Second Century Commission—a panel of experts commissioned to develop a vision and set of policy recommendations for NPS’ second hundred years—endorsed this idea as fundamental to the protection of our parks. President Obama supported this centennial initiative in his first budget request to Congress, and Congress continued the increases through fiscal year 2010.

“To me, separating the image of the National Park Service from the rangers is impossible. Rangers are an essential component of the parks. They are the ambassadors for the splendor that is there, the messengers who convey why what is there is important and the role models for how to protect what is there for future generations...”

— LINDA H., SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

“...cuts in Federal Land Acquisition could eliminate an avenue to increased visitation at some parks in the long term.

Some of these proposed land acquisitions provide easier access to points of interest in the park, new parts of the park’s historical story, or increased recreational opportunities, all of which could promote an increase in visitation.”

— NATIONAL PARK SERVICE RESPONSES FOR THE RECORD, FY12 BUDGET OVERSIGHT HEARING, MARCH 9, 2011



numerous projects proposed for funding that were not supported, including at Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve and Mount Rainier National Park. Development threats at national parks are increased as a result of this cut. The amount Congress will appropriate to this critical conservation account in FY12 is unclear. The president proposed more than \$100 million in project funding, which is just 5% of the total need to address the acquisition backlog. Ongoing LWCF investments are needed to keep up with this \$2 billion backlog in projects. Yet, the account is being raided, with a balance of now over \$17 billion that has been diverted to other purposes.

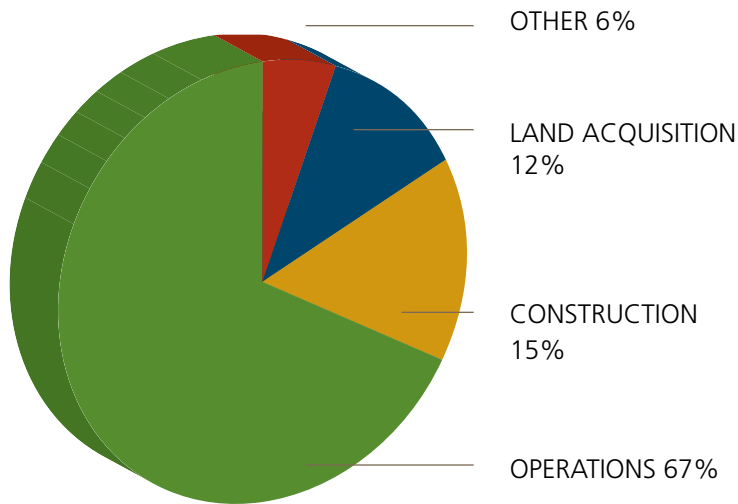
Historic Preservation and Interpretation Grants Zeroed Out: The Save America’s Treasures and Preserve America grants programs were reduced from \$29.6 million to zero. These grant programs attracted private funds to help preserve and interpret nationally significant historic resources including Civil War relics and the Star-Spangled Banner.

Without sufficient LWCF funding, we miss opportunities to protect nationally significant resources. At Valley Forge National Historical Park, there were numerous requests for funding to purchase land critical to interpretation. Due to insufficient funds, the property was nearly developed. **Above:** George Washington’s headquarters in Valley Forge. ©Stephen Hardy/ISTock-photo. **Left Page:** (Left): Baker Island, Acadia NP. ©Sheridan Steele/NPS. (Middle Top): Unilever intern with Jr. Rangers at Mammoth Hot Springs. ©Jim Peaco/NPS. (Middle Bottom): Storm damage at Delaware Water Gap, NJ (Right): Washington DC.

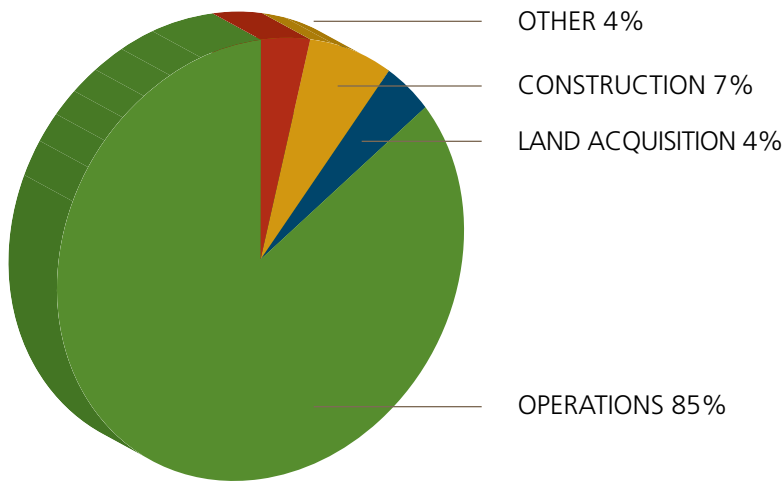
“In addition to being the Valley Forge area’s and Montgomery County’s flagship visitor attraction, Valley Forge National Historical Park represents a major thread in the economic and social fiber of Southeast Pennsylvania. Its importance to our hospitality industry’s \$1.2 billion economic impact on Montgomery County can’t be overstated, nor can its contribution to the regional quality of life as a universally appreciated, four-season recreation opportunity and scenic, bucolic ‘mind-clearing’ public space for residents and visitors alike.”

— PAUL DECKER, PRESIDENT, VALLEY FORGE CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU, LTD

FY02 NPS BUDGET



FY11 NPS BUDGET



In this environment of constrained resources, operations must continue to be the first priority, but the budget situation has reached a stage where there are damagingly inadequate investments in other accounts critical to the mission of the park service.

Congress and the Bush and Obama administrations recognized the importance of park operations by restoring funding for the account in recent years, in part to help meet ongoing increases in fixed costs. However, the last decade has involved a pattern whereby funding for other needs has been eroded, resulting in insufficient funding to acquire critical land parcels and to address the growing maintenance backlog. And now, with calls for further cuts, there is literally nowhere left to turn to identify additional cuts.

The overall future of our national parks depends on each of these areas receiving sufficient funding.

That injecting of money—very little in the context of the larger federal budget—meant that many parks were able to begin hiring a more adequate number of seasonal rangers to regain some of the critical ground they had lost over the years. These rangers have addressed longstanding program, maintenance, and resource needs and have improved park visitors' experiences.

Nevertheless, many other parks still are struggling to keep all information and visitor centers open all day and do not have the resources to hire enough park rangers to monitor areas of cultural significance, manage park species and prevent the deterioration of our national treasures. And it appears that situation is about to get worse.

Helping local economies

National parks not only protect our heritage; they are important to local economies nationwide. A recent study commissioned by NPCA found that every federal dollar invested in national parks generates at least four dollars in direct economic impact to the economy—supporting more than \$13 billion of direct local private-sector economic activity and nearly 270,000 private sector jobs. Some parks, like Acadia, produce as much as \$16 in economic benefit for every dollar invested.

Similarly, a recent study by the University of Massachusetts Political Economy and Research Institute determined that for each \$1 million invested in conservation, more than 20 jobs are created, among the highest of all economic sectors examined.

A 2005 study by Northern Arizona University found that tourists visiting Grand Canyon National Park spend \$687 million a year in northern Arizona, which translates into approximately 12,000 jobs in the area. The importance of Grand Canyon to the local economy cannot be understated; the looming closure of Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona during the federal government shutdown of

1995-1996 led former Governor Fife Symington to call in the Arizona National Guard in a failed effort to operate the park. An agreement with the U.S. Department of the Interior allowed the state to pay \$17,000 a day to keep two popular areas of the park open. “The Grand Canyon is a huge tourist draw for the state of Arizona,” noted Renee Bahl, the Arizona state parks director.

Headwaters Economics of Bozeman, Montana, recently launched a web data base showing how protected public lands such as national parks play an important economic role for local communities. The research firm found, for example, that local areas around Yellowstone have 5,155 jobs tied to the park, with visitors spending \$302 million in 2009. Another nearby park, Idaho’s Craters of the Moon National Monument, supports 104 jobs and created \$5.8 million in visitor spending in Idaho in 2009.

Beyond the benefits of tourism dollars, national park gateway communities attract skilled labor and businesses that are drawn to the scenic and recreational amenities that parks offer. “In a modern economy today, if you think of who’s

competitive globally, it’s our ability to attract talented workers,” said Ray Rasker, executive director of Headwaters Economics. “What are talented workers looking for? One of the things they look for is quality of life and recreational access.”

The recent threat of a federal government shutdown reemphasized the economic importance of national parks. The National Park Service estimated the potential economic impact of an April parks shutdown as \$32 million per day. As families called the park service worried about the uncertainty of their vacations, businesses in communities surrounding our parks were deeply concerned about the potential impact of closures. “My business would go under, and I would lose it all,” remarked one business owner about her and her ten employees outside Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks.

Bottom (Left): A train passes the Flagstaff Amtrak station at night. ©Angela Oakes/ISTockphoto. **(Right):** A sign stating that the trail is closed in the Grand Canyon National Park. ©Denis Smith/ISTockphoto.

“Visitation, tourism, and jobs related to nearby public lands annually contribute billions to regional economies while creating hundreds of thousands of private sector jobs. The economic benefits extend far beyond tourism. In today’s economy, the greatest value of natural amenities and recreation opportunities often lies in the land’s ability to attract and retain people, entrepreneurs, their businesses, and the growing number of retirees who locate for quality of life reasons.”

— HEADWATERS ECONOMICS, 2001

“In Flagstaff, AZ, the gateway community to Grand Canyon National Park, many entrepreneurs, including those in the biosciences and technology sectors, choose Flagstaff as their base because of its proximity to a wide variety of nearby natural amenities and recreation opportunities. There is no doubt that the health of our local economy is closely intertwined with the four national parks and other protected lands in this region.”

— CELIA BAROTZ, VICE MAYOR, FLAGSTAFF, AZ



No fat left to cut: the harsh reality of fixed costs

The vast majority of a park's operating budget is consumed by fixed costs such as salaries for permanent employees and utility expenses. Many superintendents have discretion over less than 10 percent of their budget. Out of that small pot, the superintendent must hire needed rangers for the park's busy season, pay for research and monitoring that guide science-based management, and make other investments to steward resources and serve visitors.

This means that with a modest cut in base funding, or even just a "flat" budget, the absorption of increasing fixed costs causes a substantial loss of the employees who protect parks and serve visitors.

Some of those fixed costs are uncontrollable and unpredictable, such as fuel or utility prices. At Lake Mead National Recreation Area, for example, extreme

fluctuations in water levels on the lower Colorado River have cost the park service millions of dollars for measures that adapt to the changing shoreline. Increased costs have included adjusting piers to accommodate recreation, managing visitors who are exploring previously flooded areas, and combatting an increase in invasive plants.

Cutting operations = cutting jobs

To protect resources and assist park visitors during the months of heaviest visitation, park managers typically hire a number of seasonal staff to help with interpretation, maintenance, law enforcement and other critical park functions. In larger parks, that can mean dozens of jobs, which often go to residents of nearby communities.

But with fixed costs taking up so much of parks' budgets, cuts in the operational budget mean:

- fewer—or no—seasonal hires, and that means fewer jobs for surrounding communities;
- fewer resource protection rangers on patrol;
- less staff and shorter hours in visitor centers;
- fewer rangers to provide interpretive programs and staff information booths;
- declines in resource monitoring and management activities;
- and fewer employees available to clean campsites and restrooms, maintain trails and pick up trash.

"Reduced operational funding levels may result in a reduction of seasonal staffing at some parks that may impact local employment levels."

— NATIONAL PARK SERVICE RESPONSES FOR THE RECORD,
FY12 BUDGET OVERSIGHT HEARING, MARCH 9, 2011

Big Bend National Park | San Antonio Missions National Historical Park (Texas)

Big Bend National Park welcomed more than 350,000 visitors in 2009, including more than 170,000 overnight stays. Visitors spent more than \$15 million, creating hundreds of private-sector jobs.

In 2009, the impact of **San Antonio Missions National Historical Park** was \$98.8 million in economic activity, supporting more than a thousand jobs. Every dollar invested yielded \$20 in local economic activity. And every \$4,300 of federal funds supported one local job.

Right (Top): A javelina pokes around the Chisos Basin trailhead area, Big Bend NP. ©Ed Bollech/NPS. **(Below):** Historic mission is located in San Antonio. ©Jerry Moorman/Istockphoto



The compromised impact on the visitor experience also has an unmeasured impact on return park visitors and the economic stimulation that accompanies those visits.

The axe does not fall equally on all parks. Large parks with heavy visitation and lots of employees can often shift money or use fees collected from visitors to maintain needed capacity and improve visitors' experiences—though likely at the cost of delaying maintenance projects or other work. Smaller parks can't afford those strategies, and frequently just have to go without seasonal employees who are usually visitors' first point of contact.

And not all big parks can count on fees and a large permanent staff to ease a budget crunch. Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve in Alaska faced the 2011 summer season with open permanent positions and 25% fewer seasonal workers hired than in previous years.

Because of budgetary challenges this fiscal year, Voyageurs National Park only

Wrangell-St. Elias (Alaska)

"The park reduced summer hires by 25% this year... As a result of our budget situation, the protection staff will be smaller, and the work season shorter, but last year's priorities remain this year's: emergency medical response, search and rescue, and bear/human conflict management..."

— FORMER SUPERINTENDENT MEG JENSEN
WRANGELL-ST. ELIAS NEWS, JULY-AUGUST 2011

"[Wrangell-St. Elias] hired 24 fewer seasonal employees in 2011 park-wide than in 2010 due to fewer projects being funded. We are anticipating similar uncertainty in funding levels for the foreseeable future...."

— NPS ALASKA REGIONAL DIRECTOR SUE MASICA
COPPER RIVER RECORD, OCTOBER 20, 2011

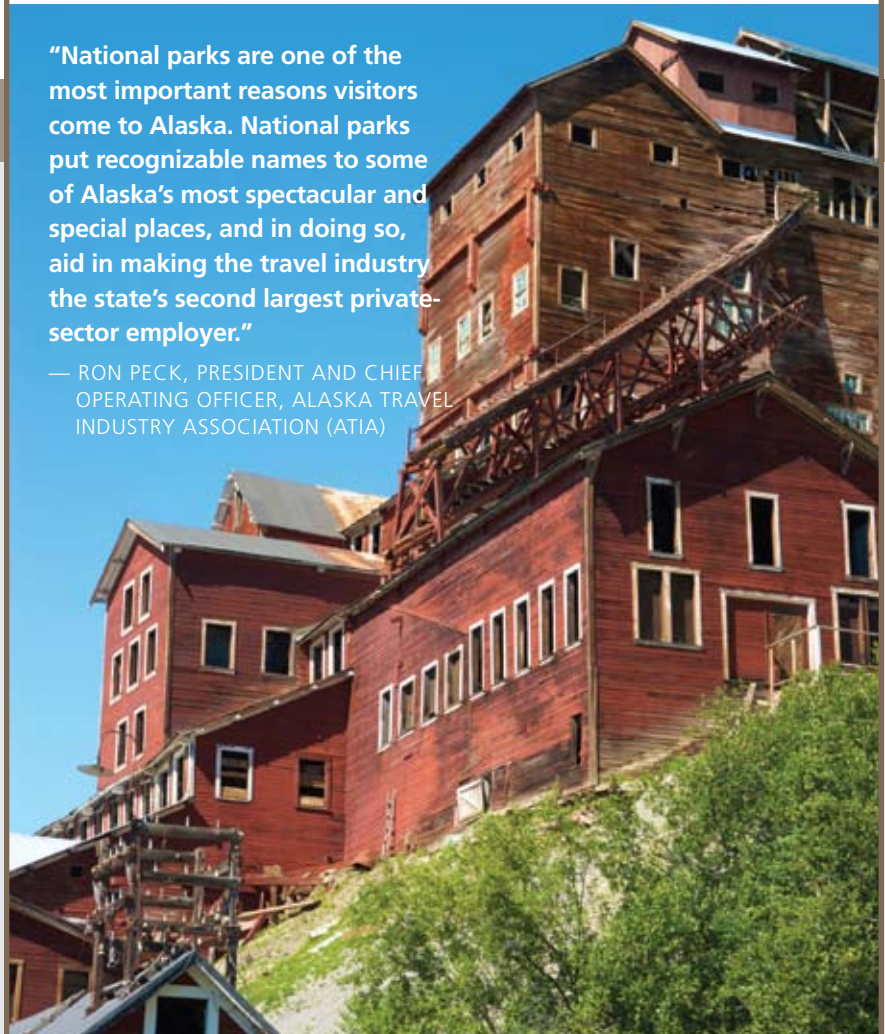
Below: The Kennecott copper mine in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, Alaska.
©Scott Arko/Stockphoto

"National parks are one of the most important reasons visitors come to Alaska. National parks put recognizable names to some of Alaska's most spectacular and special places, and in doing so, aid in making the travel industry the state's second largest private-sector employer."

— RON PECK, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, ALASKA TRAVEL INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION (ATIA)

"San Antonio Missions National Historical Park is an economic and cultural anchor for San Antonio and its southside neighborhoods. As the whole community turns its attention to restoring the river and revitalizing this part of San Antonio, we stand at a confluence of opportunities. With continued investment and support, the park stands to become an ever-more integral part of San Antonio's economic fabric."

— NELSON W. WOLFF
BEXAR COUNTY JUDGE



Shenandoah National Park

“When Congress hands the National Park Service a flat budget, it isn’t really flat because our fixed costs—fuel prices, costs of employee benefits for permanent staff, rent, and utilities—are always rising.

As a Superintendent, one is then faced with a smaller and smaller discretionary allocation—what’s left over after the fixed costs are paid.

It is from this discretionary allocation that seasonal rangers get hired, brochures get printed, and even toilet paper gets purchased—simple things visitors come to expect when they go to a national park. When we are forced to make those cuts, visitors notice and don’t get the experience they deserve.

A budget that at a minimum meets these fixed costs is the best way we can ensure emergency response, day-to-day maintenance of facilities, and rangers who guide visitors up Old Rag, our popular hiking trail.”

— BILL WADE, FORMER SUPERINTENDENT,
SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK

Right: Taking in the view from Hawksbill Mountain, the highest peak in Shenandoah. ©John F. Michell/NPS.

Far Right (Top): Service learning at Denali National Park ©Student Conservation Association. **(Middle):** Visitors learn about the ever-changing Shenandoah.

©John F. Michell/NPS. **(Bottom):** National Junior Ranger Day. ©John F. Michell/NPS.



had half the seasonal summer employees compared to last year, with 50 fewer staff to serve visitors and protect resources. And a summer speaker series was also canceled for lack of staff to coordinate it, and the restoration of historic sites has been postponed.

Virginia’s Shenandoah National Park recorded more than 1.1 million visitors in 2009. Those visitors spent more than \$63 million, supporting almost 800 jobs. But over the last several years, even with modest increases in its operations budget, the park has cut positions from every division. For example, maintenance workers dropped from 50 to 26 in 2010.

And some parks have seen their permanent staff shrink as their budget

erodes. Ten years ago, the Blue Ridge Parkway—the most visited unit in the National Park System—had 240 permanent employees to manage the scenic drive. Today, it can afford to fill only 170 of those positions.

Here come the crowds

Visitation to national parks is higher the past two years than it has been in a decade, with now more than 280 million visitors each year. By historical standards, visitation is high, with annual visitation more than 10 million visitors above the average of the last thirty years.

Visitors to parks with a reduced staff will find it takes longer to locate a ranger to ask about the park’s features or to get

information on specific hikes. And those features may be in disrepair without maintenance staff. In Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area in Kentucky and Tennessee, one permanent trail worker can maintain 60 miles of trail—but the park has only two permanent trail workers to maintain over 400 miles of trails, and faces the prospect that they could have no seasonal workers to augment that deficit next summer.

Over the four-year sesquicentennial commemoration, most Civil War battlefield parks are expecting increased crowds. Pea Ridge National Military Park in Arkansas is increasingly becoming a destination park and saw a 63 percent increase in visitation in 2010.



Since 1980, dozens of new park units have been added to the system and visitation has increased by more than 60 million people, yet ranger positions have actually reduced by 23 percent, and seasonal law enforcement ranger numbers have declined 17 percent.

In that same year, Wind Cave National Park experienced its busiest July for cave tour visitation since 1977. On some days, in order to keep up with demand, the park offered more than 10 extra tours. Over the last three years, cave tour visitation has increased by approximately 15 percent. These visitation trends suggest that funding needs are greater than ever before—making cuts all the more painful for Americans seeking to enjoy national parks.

Telling the story

Some park superintendents do have limited access to pots of project money for functions such as maintenance and law enforcement that can help ease the effects of declining discretionary budgets. But for interpretation and education programs, there are few resources beyond base funding. As a result, these functions—which are central to quality visitor services—feel the pinch of budget cuts even more than others.

Saguaro National Park, with great potential for connecting national parks with local residents, is at capacity for its education program, even with extensive support from the park's friends group. Staffed by one permanent interpretive ranger, the program uses volunteers (on which the park is utterly dependent, with over 300 total) and members of the Teacher-Ranger-Teacher corps, an innovative nationwide program that hires local teachers for eight weeks in the summer as uniformed rangers. The teacher-rangers help out at the visitor centers and do community outreach before returning to the classroom. The park's friends group pays for buses to transport children to the park (neither the park nor the school districts can afford transport costs). From schools in

“Many parks have accurate inventories of some categories of cultural resources, but most parks have significant gaps.”

— NATIONAL PARK SERVICE RESPONSES FOR THE RECORD, FY12 BUDGET OVERSIGHT HEARING, MARCH 9, 2011

“Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is central to our quality of life in southern California. From hiking, biking, wildlife viewing, and camping, to Native American cultural exhibits, this urban oasis provides healthy recreation and enjoyment for people of all ages. The park, which is a wonderful example of federal, state, and local partnerships, is also an important contributor to our local economy. Visitation to the park is fostering private-sector spending that creates much-needed jobs.”

— CALIFORNIA STATE SENATOR FRAN PAVLEY

both the Tucson Unified School District (56,000 students) and the Sunnyside Unified School District (20,000 students), the park was able to handle about 1,200 students last year and may be able to accommodate that number again. But these numbers fall far short of meeting the overall demand from the schools—and the program is limited by funding constraints that limit staff.

For some smaller parks, it's surprising how little money makes the difference between a park that's fully functional and one that's barely operating. In 2006, the entire budget of Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site was consumed by fixed costs and services. The park was unable to hire seasonal rangers for the summer, and had to close two days a week. The only interpretative program was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and matched by a private donor. A small increase in 2007 allowed Hopewell managers to hire a few seasonal staff to tell the park's story. The following year, with a base increase of \$34,000, the park was able to open every day during the summer. Yet even now, the park only has three permanent maintenance staff for 848 acres and 81 historic structures, and even a very small budget cut could force Hopewell Furnace to drop core programming.

Protecting park habitat, historic artifacts and visitor safety

Fewer staff can mean fewer personnel on hand in emergencies. Zion National Park, for example, has lost boots on the ground. From a permanent ranger staff of 13 in 2003, Zion is now down to 9—meaning that at night, only one ranger is available to respond to the needs of hundreds of campers staying in the park, and any related incidents.

A shortage of law enforcement rangers has a direct impact on park resources and in some cases, the safety of visitors and park resources are intertwined.

The addition of three full-time park rangers at Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation has been critical to

the prevention of marijuana cultivation inside the park; their presence has significantly increased the park's capacity to deny marijuana growers access to park lands, making the park a less desirable place to grow. Park rangers recently seized over 7,500 marijuana plants, and by eradicating marijuana gardens, the NPS has reduced the costs of restoration associated with this activity that diverts water, uses pesticides, and cuts native vegetation. In a press release, park superintendent Woody Smeck noted that “the environmental damage caused by marijuana cultivation in otherwise pristine natural areas costs approximately \$12,000 per acre to clean up.” Yet funding cuts that lead to a reduction in patrols and investigations could mean an increase in drug activity, very likely poisoning streams, soils and plants and potentially endangering park staff and visitors.

Poaching and illegal collection of plants continues to be a problem in many parks. Great Smoky Mountains National Park recently saw the conviction of two ginseng poachers; ginseng and other plant poaching remains a major problem there and botanists consider the park's ginseng to be at risk of elimination. If a park doesn't have enough rangers to cover the backcountry, poachers have a free hand.

Cultural resources are also suffering. In *The State of America's National Parks*, NPCA's Center for Park Research found that “Cultural resources suffer from a systemic lack of prioritization and emphasis within the National Park Service. Two-thirds of America's national park units were designated to preserve nationally significant cultural resources, but at more than 90 percent of the parks NPCA assessed, cultural resources were in ‘fair’ or ‘poor’ condition. More than 60 percent of the 27,000 historic structures in the National Park System are in need of repair. More than half of the 80 million museum artifacts in the National Park System are un-catalogued, and 53 percent of parks surveyed rated ‘fair,’ ‘poor’ or ‘critical’ in annual monitoring of cultural resources,” meaning that theft and deterioration may go unnoticed. With too few staff to watch

over them, prehistoric sites and battlefields continue to be looted and destroyed, historic buildings are vandalized and museum collections are left unorganized. Key cultural resources surveys have yet to be performed in many parks.

Sooty haze, ozone, mercury and acid rain make Shenandoah National Park one of the most polluted parks in the

country. But Shenandoah has not been able to afford a dedicated air resources program manager since 2004. The park had one staff person dedicated to air quality work and a second dedicated to water quality, but the positions were consolidated in order to save money.

Sufficient staffing is key to protecting park wildlife and plants, monitoring

pollution and invasive species, and ensuring visitor safety. By funding America's national parks, we protect them against damage that may be irreparable or take years to reverse.

Below (Top): Hiking along the ridges of Santa Monica Mountains. ©BreAnn Mueller/Stockphoto. **(Inset):** Eradication of marijuana plants in Santa Monica Mountains NRA in June 2011. ©NPS **(Bottom):** Young people visit the Santa Monica National Recreation Area. ©Ian Shive/Tandem

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (California)

Many of the 17 million people living in the Los Angeles have never visited a national park. Yet, right in their back yard is the world's largest urban national park, the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. At 153,075 acres, this great park spans more zip codes than any other unit in the National Park System, and offers rugged mountains, sandy beaches and rocky shores, canyons covered with chaparral, and abundant wildlife to the residents of one of the most densely populated cities in the U.S.

To serve that public, particularly urban youth, the park undertakes a broad array of activities, including providing education and service learning programs that reach approximately 50,000 urban youth annually with quality outdoor learning experiences. The programs are designed to connect urban youth to the outdoors and to principles of stewardship, while promoting civic responsibility and appreciation of our national heritage. The park works with service organizations to offer outdoor learning programs and works with local school districts to employ promising students in park management and interpretation.

A cut in the park's operational budget puts these programs at risk not only by depriving them of the National Park Service staff needed, but also by risking the continued support of the many partners involved.







CASE STUDIES

In the pages that follow, we highlight the effect of insufficient funding and staffing at twelve national park sites, representing the breadth of the National Park System and the resource and staffing challenges facing so many areas within the park system. In highlighting these parks, we in no way intend to signal that these parks require more or less attention than others. These case studies are based on publicly available budget information and conversations with park retirees, park advocates and other experts, and NPS officials.

Left: Flume carrying water to Reagan's mill next to Roaring Fork River, Tennessee. Great Smoky Mountains National Park. ©QT Loung/terrageria.com

Acadia National Park

MAINE

Last summer saw lines out the door of the visitor center at Acadia National Park, as tourists queued up to pay their entrance fee, ask a question, or sign up for ranger-led programs. Visitation is on the rise at Acadia—by 17 percent over the last three years. In 2010, 2.5 million people came to enjoy the first national park established east of the Mississippi. If Acadia's managers were in private business, they could hire more staff to reduce the lines and improve service to visitors. But a tight budget is already forcing the park to put fewer rangers at the visitor center desk.

Within the last three fiscal years, Acadia received a net operations budget increase of \$173,258. The increased operations funding allowed the park to hire five of 20 vacant permanent positions, including an administrative officer, a supervisory law enforcement official, and someone to drive the garbage truck and empty trash cans. The rest of the increase went to shortfalls such as rising fuel and utility prices. Still unfilled are positions in biology, equipment operations, law enforcement and other disciplines.

For now, Acadia is holding on to its seasonal staff so that the park has rangers to provide interpretive services and routine tasks during the summer season, such as respond to emergencies, and keep rest rooms and roadsides clean. Seasonal hires consume ten percent of

the park's budget, according to a report to the Acadia Advisory Commission. The remaining 90 percent is consumed by fixed costs—like utilities, fuel, and salaries (even with 15 permanent positions unfilled)—that cannot be reduced except by a Reduction-in-Force. That means any cut to Acadia's budget is most likely to come out of seasonal hires, and a ten percent cut could decimate the program. Because permanent staff are already overloaded (those 15 missing position play a role), they likely could not be shifted to cover the duties now handled by seasonals, resulting in a substantial further decline of visitor services.

Acadia also faces a dilemma about how to fund programs at its new education and research center. In 2002, the park inherited a 100-acre parcel on the Schoodic Peninsula, a former U.S. Navy base with 36 major buildings and supporting infrastructure that was transferred to the park with a small increase in operating funds. The facilities have been upgraded with money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and are now home to the Schoodic Education and Research Center, which offers a curriculum-based residential program for 5th through 8th grade students and their teachers in disciplines such as marine and forest studies and mapping, as well as an artist-in-residence program. In an era of static or declining funding, the park has to work closely

with partners to keep these programs running and protect the federal investment in the upgraded facilities.

Below: A ranger shows kids what they'll find in Duck Brook, Acadia NP. ©Ray Radigan/NPS.



“Each year, nearly three million people visit Acadia National Park. These visitors require services like lodging, dining, shopping, and a multitude of other services and they come back year after year because of the great experience they’ve had. Maintaining the quality experience visitors have at Acadia National Park is integral to the continued success of the business community in Bar Harbor.”

— CHRIS FOGG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
BAR HARBOR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

PARK PROFILE: Acadia encompasses granite-domed mountains, woodlands, lakes and ponds, and ocean shoreline. The donation of separate properties over the years has created a matrix of private and public lands with a complex and irregular park boundary—encompassing more than the 130 privately-owned parcels within its boundary. The diverse

habitats encompassed by the park make Acadia a haven for wildlife and plants. More than 1,000 plant and wildlife species, including the bald eagle and other threatened and endangered species, thrive on more than 47,500 acres of Maine’s mountainous coastal and island landscape. The park also preserves at least 5,000 years of human history,

including that of American Indians, early European settlers, and the “cottage era” of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

In 2009, there were more than 2.2 million recreational visits to Acadia. Visitors enjoyed more than 130,000 overnight stays and spent more than \$160 million, supporting more than 2,700 jobs.



Bandelier National Monument

NEW MEXICO

The recent Las Conchas fire burned over sixty-two percent of Bandelier, or more than 20,000 acres, impacting heritage resources, devastating vegetative cover and exposing soils to erosion, and damaging a range of wildlife habitat. Post-fire risks to resources and visitors persist, particularly the threat of flash flooding in canyons. Staff are mitigating risks and working to reopen areas of the monument.

In addition to having to contend with fire recovery, the park's ability to protect and care for its valuable cultural and historic resources is handicapped by understaffing in law enforcement and resource management: vacant positions include an archaeologist and a Vanishing Treasures staffer to help protect archaeological sites, such as the pre-Columbian dwelling chambers carved into the cliffs that are threatened by erosion and surface water runoff.

The park has requested funding for a senior level interpreter but currently only has junior staff to describe the unique natural resources, geology and astronomy of this ancient area. Being short-handed also means no patrols or interpreters available in the backcountry, and leaves the park unable to promote and present education programs at nearby schools.

Nine of every ten dollars in Bandelier's core budget goes to fixed costs, with up to 80% absorbed by staff salaries. Even flat funding levels could mean the park may have to furlough the staffer who takes care of water systems in the park, and may lose a custodial position as well. The park could have to pull staff off resource work—a critical problem in a park with over 3,000 archeology sites—and reduce interpretive programs, possibly by canceling the campfire talks that are already held only on Friday and Saturday nights. The budget crunch could also mean that no staffer will have the time to recruit participants to the volunteer program.

Below: Cavate dwelling ruin with ladder and saltbush. Anasazi culture. Pueblo IV period. Bandelier National Monument. ©George H. H. Huey

“Bandelier National Monument is the single biggest tourist attraction in Los Alamos County and the immediately surrounding area. As such, it plays a critical role in the fate of businesses and other organizations that rely on tourism and visitation for their livelihood. One of the key elements of the Los Alamos brand is the incredible setting and the fascinating history we have here.

Bandelier is a major contributor to this image.

Bandelier is also a major resource for locals...it is a selling point in recruitment of the best and brightest needed to serve the national interests at the Los Alamos National Laboratory. I believe that the Bandelier staff is top-notch, and is highly efficient with their use of resources. I believe that a reduction would have a profound negative impact on our community and area.”

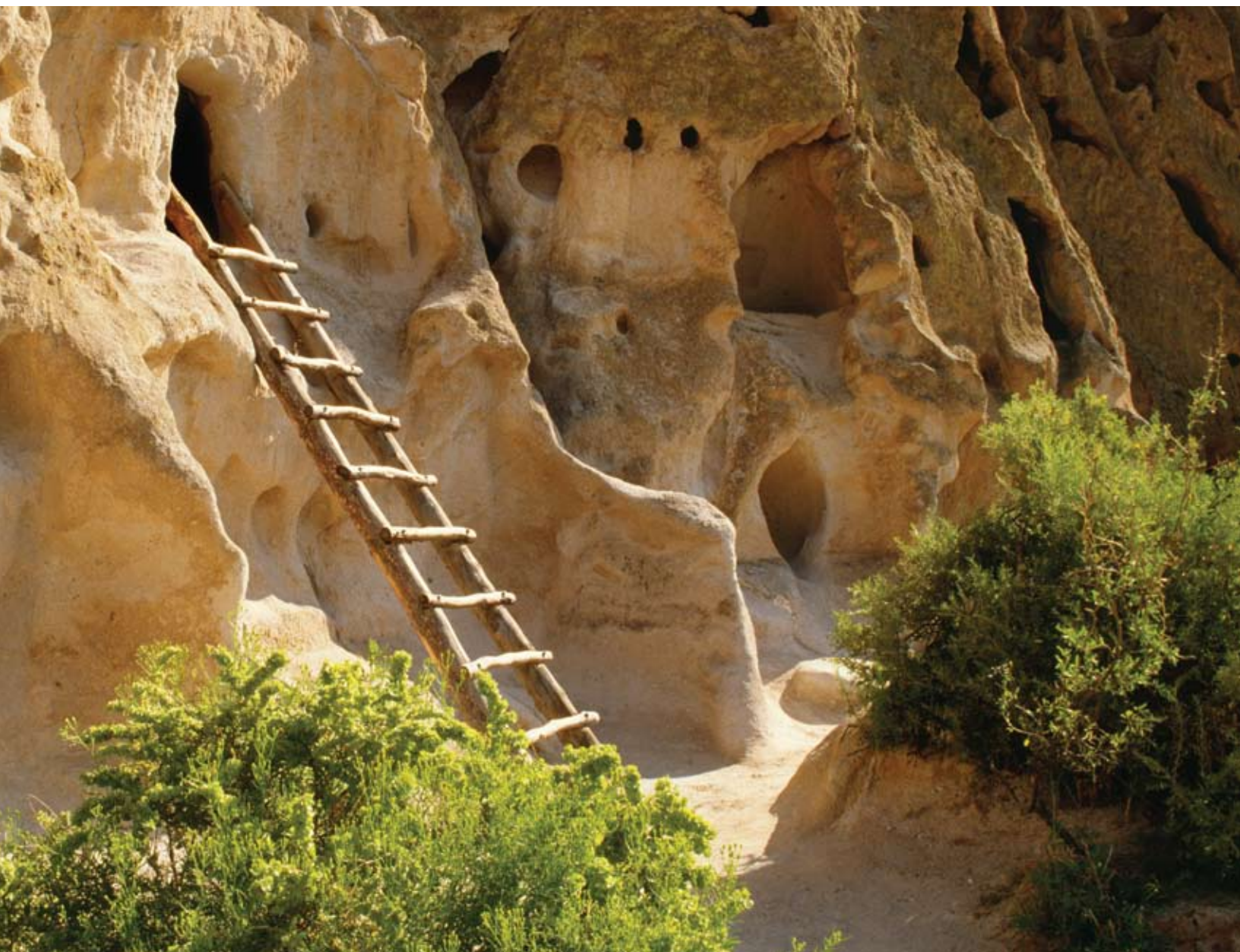
— KEVIN HOLSAPPLE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
LACDC/LOS ALAMOS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



PARK PROFILE: Designated in 1916 for its “tremendous ethnographic, scientific, and educational” values, Bandelier National Monument has been expanded many times to encompass more than 33,000 acres. Best known for

mesas, sheer-walled canyons, and the ancestral Pueblo dwellings found among them, Bandelier protects more than 2,500 archaeological sites, representing one of the highest concentrations of prehistoric sites per acre in the world.

The park also preserves several Civilian Conservation Corps buildings and furnishings, constructed between 1933 and 1940, which garnered a National Historic District designation in 1987.



CASE STUDY

Blue Ridge Parkway

VIRGINIA AND NORTH CAROLINA

Ten years ago, the nation's most visited park unit had 240 permanent positions to manage the scenic drive. Today, Blue Ridge Parkway can afford to fill only 170 of those, leaving a third of the maintenance department unstaffed.

With only 10 permanent interpretive rangers available for the 14 visitor contact facilities along the parkway, park managers are spending \$600,000 a year to hire seasonal employees to keep those facilities open during the busy season from April through October. The Parkway also offers ranger-led programs including campfire talks, guided hikes, historic craft demonstrations, music, and nature study.

The Parkway's budget totals \$16.3 million, so even a five percent cut would reduce the operating budget by \$815,000—

more than the Parkway spends on its seasonal interpreters program. At that level of cut, the Parkway would likely have to shorten hours at its visitor centers and possibly close some.

Alternatively, the Parkway could leave unfilled the positions of retiring employees (currently about half of the Parkway staff is eligible to retire). This would mean a further erosion of the already depleted staff, and could force the Parkway to fill division chiefs and law enforcement slots while maintenance, interpretation, and resource protection positions go unmanned.

A 10 percent cut would almost certainly mean the layoff of some permanent employees and the elimination of seasonal hires altogether, resulting in the closure of some of the Parkway's facilities.

Below: The Linn Cove Viaduct, part of the Blue Ridge Parkway near Grandfather Mountain.
©Tim Mainiero/ISTOCKPHOTO

“The number of assets that we are charged with taking care of—over 800 vistas, over 250 overlooks, 580 buildings, over 1,000 miles of boundary, 300 miles of trails, a hundred wastewater plants, 14 visitor centers—we have a lot of responsibilities... When our budgets are reduced, or they don't keep up with inflation, and the net effect is that we have fewer people: that means that we cannot take care of those resources as well without looking at nontraditional ways.”

— BLUE RIDGE SUPERINTENDENT PHIL FRANCIS, SPEAKING ON PBS'S PROGRAM THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY: A LONG AND WINDING ROAD



PARK PROFILE: The 469-mile Blue Ridge Parkway curves along the spine of the Appalachian Mountains linking Shenandoah National Park and Great Smoky Mountains National Park. At more than 81,000 acres, the Parkway lands encompass an unsurpassed diversity of climate zones, vegetation zones, physiographic zones, and geological features. Taking advantage of this diversity

are 14 major vegetation types, including more than 130 species of trees, about as many as are found in all of Europe. Seventy-four different mammals, more than 50 salamanders and 35 reptiles can be found here, and 159 species of birds are known to nest along the Parkway, with dozens of others passing through during fall and spring migrations. The winding road also traverses a cross-section

of Appalachian mountain history, including some of the oldest settlements of both pre-historic and early European settlement.

In 2009, Blue Ridge Parkway accommodated nearly 16 million recreational visits. Visitors spent more than \$315 million, supporting more than 4,000 jobs.



CASE STUDY

Cumberland Gap National Historical Park

KENTUCKY, VIRGINIA AND TENNESSEE

Over the past twenty years, Cumberland Gap National Historical Park has completed hundreds of millions of dollars in construction projects. Many of the park's projects have involved the use of day-laborers or seasonal workers hired from nearby communities. Given the high unemployment rate in the area, these jobs (albeit temporary) contribute to the health of the regional economy. Infrastructure improvements, and the purchase and opening of Gap Cave for tours, have resulted in increased visitation at the park and underscored the park's staffing shortages.

Several permanent positions remain vacant at Cumberland Gap, including a

deputy superintendent to help manage the park and its nearly one million yearly visitors; a resource management specialist to ensure protection of the scenic, historic, and recreational resources at the park; maintenance mechanics and laborers who help maintain facilities; and park rangers to help guide visitors and ensure their safety.

Park staff have taken several steps to keep operating expenses down, such as enhancing strategic planning, reducing utility usage, implementing cost reduction opportunities in facility operations, enhancing volunteer programs, and reevaluating low-use facilities. But despite these efficiency efforts, staff continues to struggle to meet visitors' needs.

Below: Sunset from Pinnacle Overlook in Cumberland Gap National Historical Park. ©Pat & Chuck Blackley

"At 50 years old, I finally had the chance to see the Grand Canyon. My first view brought tears to my eyes. The sight filled me with awe and wonder. I can only imagine what would happen if these places were not protected by the National Park Service. During the trip from Georgia to California, Montana and back through Tennessee, my husband and I also visit numerous other National Parks and Monuments: The Battlefield at Little Big Horn, Mount Rushmore, and the Badlands, to name a few... I have grandchildren that I want to take with me on future visits to these areas so that they will appreciate what others have done to preserve the history of our nation.

— DIANA B., JULY, 2011



PARK PROFILE: Cumberland Gap is a natural break in the Appalachian Mountains that was the first great gateway between the East and West for travelers from Native Americans to early frontier hunters, pioneers and Civil War soldiers. Eighty-five miles of trails lead

visitors to scenic vistas, past cascading waterfalls, and through lush forests to experience history and the wilderness of Kentucky. The forests and streams of the mountains provide habitat for numerous species of plants and animals, and subterranean caves provide an opportunity

to explore underground.

In 2009, Cumberland Gap accommodated nearly 900,000 recreational visitors who enjoyed more than 16,000 overnight stays and spent more than \$42 million, supporting more than 600 jobs.



Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area

PENNSYLVANIA AND NEW JERSEY

At nearly 67,000 acres, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area is a big park with big visitation numbers (averaging more than 5 million people annually). One of the 10 most visited units of the National Park System, Delaware Water Gap sees more visitors than Cape Cod National Seashore or Grand Canyon National Park.

The park infrastructure includes 200 miles of road (which need frequent plowing in winter), over 800 buildings, 23 sites on the National Register of Historic Places, more than a hundred utility rights-of-way, and 200 miles of trail. Park managers also need to keep in contact with more than a hundred elected officials across 22 townships, five counties and two states.

To manage all that, the park received \$9.86 million in operating funds last year. Of that, the park spends \$2 to \$3 million annually on road maintenance. For three years beginning in 2007, the park received an infusion of \$29 million annually from a variety of sources, including emergency supplemental funds, highway funds, and a small amount of stimulus funding; among other badly needed projects, these funds helped repair roads and bridges and fix storm damage. However, the park still has to employ a small army of seasonal workers to maintain U.S. 209, the heavily traveled highway that runs the length of the park. While some parks must maintain roads purely to accommodate visitors, ongoing

maintenance needs for the highway are needed to serve both visitors and a constant demand from daily commuters who rely on this road. Overall, the park has one of the highest levels of park infrastructure to maintain and a maintenance backlog totaling \$113 million in 2007 dollars.

The park employs a total of 95 FTEs, including 20 full-time commissioned rangers. But that leaves many vacant positions, including the need for more law enforcement officers, four interpreters, carpenters and electricians. The park went without a deputy superintendent for 18 months, and no longer employs a painter for its many buildings: they can only afford to paint when special project money is available.

The park also faces rising prices for fuel and utilities. It has also reduced the vehicle fleet from 120 to 89 vehicles to save money, and has gone from replacing three cars per year to replacing two annually; that means it will take the park at least 45 years to replace its entire fleet.

These funding challenges are exacerbated by more than \$7 million in recent damages the park sustained from Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. This fall, the Dingmans Falls access road, boardwalk trail, and visitor center were closed due to damage. There are still washed out roads, boardwalk damage and closed trails, recreation sites, campsites, and river

access sites. The Millbrook Village couldn't have its festival, Millbrook Days, which brings many visitors to the park. As a result of all the damage, visitation during this fall foliage season has been lower, and the park will have to find funding in an already insufficient budget environment to deal with these added costs.

Below: Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. Photo courtesy of Bryan Katz.



“The park is seeing a huge number of visitors—5 million a year—yet is working with a really constrained budget as it is, so we’re very concerned what would happen if there are additional cuts. The communities around here rely on visitors coming to the park and having a safe and enjoyable experience. Because that means spending at our local hotels, restaurants, gas stations and other businesses. Investing in the park means investing in our communities, so it’s a smart place to put money, especially in challenging fiscal times.”

— HERB MEYERSON, PRESIDENT, FRIENDS OF DELAWARE WATER GAP NRA

PARK PROFILE: Authorized in 1965, this national recreation area preserves 40 miles of the middle Delaware River and almost 67,000 acres of land along the river's New Jersey and Pennsylvania shores. At the south end of the park, the river cuts eastward through the Appalachian Mountains at the scenic Delaware Water Gap. Historic farmhouses and agricultural

fields keep large portions of the landscape looking as it might have in the 1800s. The park also includes significant Native American archeological sites, structures from early Dutch settlement and the colonial contact period, and a village founded by the early resort industry fostered by the railroads. The entire region was a frontier of the French & Indian War. Historic rural villages from

the 18th and 19th centuries remain intact on the New Jersey side, and landscapes of past settlements are scattered throughout the park.

In 2009, there were more than five million recreational visits to Delaware Water Gap. Visitors enjoyed more than 100,000 overnight stays and spent more than \$108 million, supporting more than a thousand jobs.



Everglades National Park

FLORIDA

Everglades is one of the most well-known and loved national parks in the system, protecting a unique ecosystem that has been designated a World Heritage Site, an International Biosphere Reserve, and a Wetland of International Importance. Yet the ecosystem will continue to struggle without additional federal investments. This iconic park represents the intersecting needs of operations, construction and land acquisition dollars, all of which are in need to ensure the restoration of this outstanding ecosystem.

The diverse staff needs at the park demonstrate the importance of operations funding. Staff is needed to fight exotic wildlife like pythons, fish, and the Nile monitor, which eat native species. The park service has also noted the importance of providing staff to ensure mandatory boater education. Recreators need to be educated on boating in shallow waters so that they can avoid destroying the sea grass as they are currently doing. And in Florida Bay, there has been an ongoing problem with insufficient law enforcement officers, especially officers who have the boating skills and local

knowledge to navigate one of the most difficult bodies of waters in the world because of its breadth, ultra-shallow nature and environmental sensitivity.

Additionally, substantial construction dollars are needed to complete the Modified Water Deliveries project, which will restore the historic natural water flow as a central component to restoring the ecosystem, enhancing biological diversity and improving recreational and commercial opportunities. The project includes the one-mile bridge construction on Tamiami Trail, which has already produced more than 1,200 regional jobs through an \$81 million contract. Without the funding for this particular project, construction delays will occur, costs will rise, and restoration will become increasingly difficult.

This project can be further supported by the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The president's FY12 budget requests \$25 million to purchase private parcels within the park from willing sellers. Flooding these properties once bridge construction is complete will permit the

needed water flows and avert millions in costs to construct flood control structures. But only Congress can approve this funding request.

Fulfilling restoration needs at Everglades is crucial to the long-term protection of the ecosystem. It is also a valuable economic investment: recent research by



“Parks like Yellowstone and Everglades National Park are part of larger ecosystems that Congress and state and local authorities must also protect from needless development.”

— NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL, SEP 27, 2009

“We have institutions that do not get much publicity but are essential to the nation’s well-being in unique ways. The National Park Service is one such institution, and it should be spared the budget ax—if anything is spared...Economically, cutting park service funds makes no sense. After all, more people have been visiting national parks, their spending creating millions of jobs in gateway communities. The parks make money.”

— BILL MAXWELL, COLUMNIST, ST. PETERSBURG TIMES, MARCH 13, 2011

Mather Economics indicates that every dollar invested in Everglades restoration yields four dollars in economic value to the public. The study found that spending \$11.5 billion on the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan would generate another \$46.5 billion in jobs, tourism dollars, and higher home values. The best-case scenario outlined in the study increases that return to \$123.9 billion.

In 2009, there were nearly a million recreational visits to the Everglades, with more than 30,000 overnight stays. Visitors spent more than \$162 million, supporting more than 2,000 jobs.

Below: A young couple taking a leisure canoe trip down the Turner River in the Florida Everglades. ©Terry J Alcorn/ISTockphoto



CASE STUDY

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

TENNESSEE AND NORTH CAROLINA

The most visited national park in the system, Great Smoky Mountains relies heavily on volunteers to preserve its diverse plant and animal life and serve its more than 9 million annual visitors. In 2008, the park received funding to hire a second volunteer coordinator who has since helped the park become the fifth-largest beneficiary of volunteers in the National Park System, with 2,400 volunteers donating 124,000 hours to the park in 2008 alone. The adopt-a-trail and adopt-a-campsite programs have been particularly important in maintaining the park's 800-mile trail system.

At the standard estimate of \$20 per hour for volunteer work, calculations show that the park was able to generate \$2.48 million worth of work from volunteers, while fostering ethics in conservation and community service and helping people get outdoors to engage in healthy activities. That's a hefty return on the investment in salaries for two volunteer coordinators. Yet volunteer coordination activities are

often among the first functions to be sacrificed when a park hits tight budget times—those staffers are often reassigned to more pressing duties.

Meanwhile, the park encompasses 500,000 acres of old-growth forest and many other wild and little-traveled areas. Patrolling this vast expanse is difficult and expensive, especially in a park where there are so many visitors in the front-country. But backcountry rangers play a vitally important role in protecting the park's rare plants and animals. Over the last 18 years, law enforcement rangers have confiscated 13,000 ginseng roots in the Smokies, including a bust last October in which rangers apprehended two North Carolina men with 805 ginseng roots they'd dug from the park. Clay Jordan, the park's chief ranger, noted: "Due to the high market value of ginseng, the illegal harvest of this plant continues to be a serious problem in Great Smoky Mountains National Park...In the international and domestic legal trade market, wild ginseng can bring between

\$500 and \$800 per pound of dried roots." Ginseng and other plant poaching remains a major problem, and park botanists consider the park's ginseng population to be at risk of elimination.

Below: Cades Cove Dirt Road Hyatt Lane, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. ©Daveallenphoto/Dreamstime.com



"...we are a continuing value for families who want to get the most from an affordable vacation."

— NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SPOKESWOMAN NANCY GRAY,
IN KNOXVILLE NEWS SENTINEL, AUGUST, 2011

PARK PROFILE: Great Smoky Mountains National Park was designated in 1934 and later declared both an International Biosphere Reserve and a World Heritage Site because of its irreplaceable ecological values. One of the largest protected areas in the East,

the park covers a half million acres in Tennessee and North Carolina. It is home to an abundance of plant and animal species and preserves a variety of structures from a rich human history, including early settlers' cabins, barns, churches, and gristmills.

In 2009, there were more than 9 million recreational visits to the park. Visitors enjoyed more than 400,000 overnight stays and spent nearly \$800 million, supporting more than 11,000 jobs.



CASE STUDY

Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area

WASHINGTON

With base increases in each of the last two years, Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area has been able to address serious water quality concerns, including a major visitor education program to teach campers how to properly dispose of human waste. But that progress could be jeopardized if funding cuts force staff reductions.

In addition to supplementing border protection, the addition of five permanent positions to the ranger division has enabled the park to conduct better sanitation outreach to visitors, which has resulted in a documented decrease in waste pollution.

The base increases also funded a specialist position to analyze what steps are needed to clean up a hundred years of mining waste that flowed into the Columbia River from a smelter in Canada. While other Interior Department agencies are

involved in cleaning up the hazardous waste, the NPS standards for water quality call for higher protection of the river as it flows through the park; prior to the recent staff addition, NPS was the only federal bureau involved without staff dedicated to this project. The pollution has sparked concern about impacts on bald eagles, and copper and slag deposited in the river appear to be affecting the ability of sturgeon to reproduce, but the park has never been able to fully fund a program to protect natural and cultural resources, and it lacks sufficient staff experts in biology and botany to track these and other important resource protection concerns.

Water quality concerns remain, despite recent improvements, and much work is yet to be done. If the park were forced to absorb a 5% cut, these vastly improved efforts to improve water quality would be substantially undermined.

Below: Lake Roosevelt National Recreational Area. ©Kirkendall-Spring Photographers



America's national parks are also living laboratories, where our boundless curiosity is challenged by nature's unbridled forces.

— PRESIDENT GEORGE H.W. BUSH

PARK PROFILE: Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area in northeast Washington stretches from the Grand Coulee Dam almost to the Canadian border. Geologically, the park showcases a ten-million-year history of repeated lava flows, dating until about six million years ago. Human history on the upper Columbia River can be traced back at

least 10,000 years; in 1941, damming of the river as part of the Columbia River Basin project created a 130-mile long lake; fifteen years later, the 100,000-acre national recreation area was established under the joint management of the Bureau of Reclamation and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. A new management structure involving the National Park

Service and other agencies and tribal governments was established in 1990.

In 2009, there were more than 1.3 million recreational visits to Lake Roosevelt. Visitors enjoyed more than 140,000 overnight stays and spent nearly \$40 million, supporting nearly 500 jobs.



Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument

MONTANA

Only a handful of historic sites capture our imaginations like the Little Bighorn Battlefield, where, in 1876, the U.S. Army under Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer met defeat at the hands of Lakota and Cheyenne warriors fighting to preserve their way of life. But Little Bighorn has big problems.

Visitation has tripled since the visitor center was built in 1952, and the structure now has significant building and safety code problems. It's too small to house the exhibits, host ranger programs, or have a proper theater area for viewing an interpretive video of the battle, and without adequate space, the ranger-led programs have to be conducted outside on the high plains where temperatures can reach 90 degrees and above. The park also does not have enough parking for visitors — 320,959 in 2010.

The monument has 149,000 documents and objects, items that bring to life the story of the battle and its participants. Yet, because the current building has inadequate exhibit space, few of those items have ever been available for the public to see. Worse, those treasures are stored in a basement that is damp, cramped and without fire protection. This spring during heavy rains, water

ran down the basement walls, exacerbating the dangers to the collection.

"I lie awake at night worrying about irreversible harm or catastrophic loss," Superintendent Kate Hammond wrote in the Billings Gazette.

The park is in the process of moving the collection to the National Park Service's secure, state-of-the-art conservation center in Tucson, Ariz. But the collection belongs at Little Bighorn, and tribes who count hundreds of items in the collection among their sacred relics are unhappy that those objects will be so far away. Preservation in Arizona is critical to protecting those irreplaceable pieces of American history, but the move demonstrates that the basic funding needs of the national monument are not being met.

In a 2003 *State of the Parks* report, NPCA called for Congress to heed the park service's repeated requests to fund a new, larger visitor center to accommodate increased visitation and provide adequate space for interpretive displays and staff work stations, with funding for staff to operate the visitor center. The report also requested that Congress ensure funding for safe housing of the monument's valuable museum and archival collections, at the visitor center

or in another facility, and called for funding to address the parking and transit issues. None of these needs have been met.

Below: Memorial marker on the Reno-Benteen Battlefield, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. ©George H. H. Huey

"Fans and space heaters labored to dry water that had seeped down walls and under carpets at the 60-year-old visitor center during a three-day rainstorm. In the basement, where countless millions of dollars worth of artifacts, documents and rare books are stored, interior walls were dripping water during the peak of the storm Tuesday. Park Service employees had piled towels to absorb moisture in the curator's office just a few yards from the museum vault [containing] documents signed by President Abraham Lincoln and items from Lt. Col. George A. Custer's uniform..."

— BILLINGS GAZETTE, MAY 13 2011



PARK PROFILE: Located in south central Montana on the present-day Crow Indian Reservation, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument preserves 765 acres of the battlefield on which Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer and the 7th Cavalry fought Lakota and Cheyenne warriors under Chief Sitting Bull. The park encompasses the famous Last

Stand Hill where Custer and his men died; the nearby Reno-Benteen Battlefield; a memorial erected in 1881 over the mass grave of the 7th Cavalry soldiers and scouts; and markers erected where individual members of the 7th Cavalry fell and Indian warriors were known to have died. In addition, the monument includes historic structures,

archaeological sites, and one of the most impressive museum and archival collections in the National Park System.

“Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument is a large draw for out-of-state tourists to Southeast Montana. The Monument is located within 5 minutes of the town of Crow Agency, MT with a population of about 1,500, and within 20 minutes of the town of Hardin, MT with a population of about 3,200. Both these towns can be considered gateway communities to the Monument and benefit greatly from its visitation. Over 300,000 people visit this monument annually representing hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue for Montana. These people purchase fuel, food, souvenirs, and accommodations in the communities mentioned above. If the Monument were to be closed, or if it no longer had the ability to meet the needs of its visitors, the impact to the local economy could be severe.”

— JOHN BREWER, CAE; PRESIDENT/CEO; MONTANA'S CUSTER COUNTRY, INC.



Olympic National Park

WASHINGTON

Located less than three hours away from the Seattle metropolitan area, Olympic National Park is a showcase for Pacific Ocean beaches, rain forest valleys and glacier-capped peaks. Since the mid-1980s, Olympic's base budget (despite modest growth) had not kept pace with unfunded costs and increasing visitation, and forced the park to trim visitor services despite the park's growing popularity.

In 2004, facing a \$6 million shortfall in operating funds, the park cut seasonal employees from 130 to 25. That reduction in staff meant that, for the first time in the park's history, operating hours at visitor centers were reduced. Public education programs were cut to ensure the remaining centers could be staffed all summer. The visiting public also found shorter campground seasons, some closed entrance stations and backcountry trails. Fewer law enforcement patrols protected visitors and

prevented poaching of the park's diverse and endangered animals such as bear, elk, and fish.

If not for a small budget increase in 2005, the park would have closed the heavily-used Forks Park and Forest Visitor Information Station, which attracts approximately 17,000 visitors annually. In 2008, a base increase allowed Olympic National Park to provide longer hours at visitor centers, more staff and training for volunteers. Of that increase, \$542,000 went specifically to hiring summer seasonal workers.

But funding for basic maintenance projects is still in short supply. The park relies heavily on the \$1.5 million in annual entrance fees to replace aging pit toilets with vault toilets, install new picnic tables, renovate the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center, repair trails, and install bear-proof food lockers. For

Olympic, flat or decreased funding could mean a return to 2004-level services, when visitors were less likely to interact with park staff and protection of Olympic's resources declined.

Below: Stream crossing in Olympic National Park. ©Bryan Donahue/Stockphoto

"Our businesses rely on people visiting the park," former Forks Mayor Nedra Reed told the Peninsula Daily News in May 2004.

Investments in the ecosystem restoration of the Elwha River yield valuable economic returns. The removal of the Elwah and Glines Canyon Dams and the restoration of the full 70-mile Elwha River salmon run is expected to create 1,200 new jobs in the county, accounting for an additional \$37 million in wages. This three percent increase is more than the number of jobs lost in the timber industry between 1987 and 1995. Restoring the river and native forest will boost tourism, which already supports 2,000 local jobs and \$21 million in wages. Elwha restoration could boost travel spending by 50 percent, bringing in an additional \$57 million a year from 500,000 more visitor trips to Clallam County. And as more sediments flow downstream, the Ediz Hook Lighthouse will undergo less erosion, saving an estimated \$31,000 a year in maintenance and upkeep costs.



PARK PROFILE: Initially designated a national monument in 1909, Olympic was reclassified as a national park in 1938. Today, the park protects nearly one million acres of mountainous landscapes, old growth trees, temperate rainforest, 3,000 miles of wild salmon streams, and unspoiled beaches that span 73 miles of wild coastline—the

largest outside of Alaska. Visitors exploring the coastline at low tide may find petroglyphs that were carved into seaside rocks 300 to 500 years ago by American Indians. Mount Olympus and other surrounding peaks are home to a variety of wildlife, including 24 animal and plant species that are found nowhere else in the world.

In 2009, there were more than three million recreational visits to Olympic. Visitors enjoyed more than 340,000 overnight stays and spent more than \$113 million, supporting more than 1,500 jobs.



Petersburg National Battlefield Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park

VIRGINIA

Illegal relic hunting is a threat to our cultural history at many national parks. Recently, a law enforcement ranger arrested a person allegedly digging numerous holes in search of artifacts at Petersburg National Battlefield, where a 292-day siege brought Confederate General Robert E. Lee's army to its knees and led to Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House.

This ranger, who prevented plundering at one of the most significant sites of the Civil War, is "subject to furlough," meaning that when park managers run out of money, the ranger can be laid off for several months. At Petersburg, one of the park's four law enforcement positions, three of 12 maintenance staff, and one park guide out of 10 interpretative staff are subject to furloughs of up to six months. A common strategy for park managers to balance their budgets in tight budget years is to furlough positions at the maximum level, increasing the workload on other employees.

Due to budget constraints, the park went from five full-time law enforcement positions to four full-time and one seasonal position. Petersburg also hires

seasonal workers to assist the permanent staff with visitor services and maintenance. But because 93 percent of the park's fiscal 2011 budget will go to fixed costs, park managers have little flexibility to hire seasonal staff. An increase in fixed costs—or a budget cut—almost certainly means a reduction in the number of seasonal staff the park can hire, and may cause longer furloughs for permanent staff as well.

About an hour north of Petersburg on I-95, at the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, fixed costs absorb 97 percent of the budget. In years when appropriations did not cover required pay increases, park managers left open positions vacated through retirements and transfers to keep the books balanced. Currently, the park has open positions in interpretation and maintenance, and lacks an education specialist who would enable the park for the first time to offer curriculum-based education programming to school groups. There are 50,000 school children in the area the park could reach out to, but they have neither an education specialist nor any indoor space in which to hold educational forums.

Below: Petersburg National Battlefield.
©Brian Swartz/ISTOCKPHOTO

As with other national park gateway communities, people in Fredericksburg, Virginia, were deeply concerned about the possibility of a federal government shutdown in April 2011.

According to FredericksburgPatch, one such person was Laura Hill, the manager of tourism sales with Fredericksburg's Tourism and Economic Development Authority, who was worried about the possibility of visitors being forced to cancel their park visits. "Basically we are in a wait and see mode," she reported. "We're trying to come up with some contingency plans for tourist groups, particularly student trips."

In reference to a class of 8th graders scheduled to visit the region's battlefields, she said, "I hold out hope that Congress can come to an agreement so that all these students can do what they have worked so hard to do. They raised money all year to take this trip, then for them to come to the area and be unable to do what they had planned to do is just sad."



PARK PROFILE: Petersburg National Battlefield was the setting for the longest siege in American warfare. The park includes City Point, where Union General Ulysses S. Grant directed the 10-month siege; Five Forks, where a Confederate loss triggered the end of the siege; and

Poplar Grove Cemetery, where soldiers hastily buried during the conflict were properly interred after the war's end.

Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park encompasses four Civil War

battlefields—Chancellorsville, Fredericksburg, the Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Court House—the Fredericksburg National Cemetery, and four historic buildings associated with these sites.



MAKING ENDS MEET: ADDITIONAL REVENUE SOURCES

Park managers have several short-term options available to them as they struggle to make ends meet, ranging from increasing entrance fees to greater recruitment of volunteers. However, this Band-Aid® approach is far from sufficient to meet parks funding and staffing needs, as identified in this report.



Investing in volunteers

One way park managers make ends meet is by turning to volunteers for help. In 2010, approximately 221,000 volunteers worked in 375 national park sites, programs, and offices, donating 6.4 million hours with a total value to the NPS of \$133.2 million. In the 80 parks units assessed for *The State of America's National Parks* report, volunteers were consistently noted as an important tool to accomplish critical resource management work that could not have been done by park staff alone.

Volunteers greet visitors, help them plan their time in a park, pull invasive weeds and clear debris from trails. Qualified volunteers also assist with special events, organize files or digitize documents. The standard estimate for volunteer hours is now approximately \$20 per hour, showing the tremendous value of the services

these volunteers provide for a small investment in volunteer coordinators.

Unfortunately, most parks are not equipped to take full advantage of volunteers: to make effective use of this unpaid workforce, park staff must train them, take time to nurture the relationship to reduce turnover, and find funds to facilitate their projects (for example, even volunteers need fueled vehicles to bring them to the job site). At Muir Woods National Monument, park employees cannot make use of all the volunteer assistance that is offered, because they do not have enough staff to organize and supervise volunteer workers on much-needed projects such as rebuilding trails and protecting the park's cultural landscape.

Mississippi National River and Recreation Area needs a full-time volunteer

manager to expand a program that currently involves approximately 6,000 volunteers annually who contribute over 26,000 hours of work. The economic value of the work the volunteers are doing is priceless: in real terms, it equates to the equivalent of almost 13 full time employees at a value of about \$600,000.

Not all parks can afford volunteer coordinators, yet as these examples show, a single coordinator on staff can produce many times the value of their salary by recruiting and managing volunteers.

Partnerships and private philanthropy

Nationally, park friends groups and other park philanthropies raise a substantial amount each year for the parks, supporting park projects such as the new education center at Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park, programs that introduce children from some of the poorest neighborhoods in Los Angeles to hiking and camping in nearby national parks, and development of the Flight 93 memorial in Pennsylvania. These are significant investments in the parks, but if these funds are used to replace instead of augment annual appropriations from Congress and the administration, friends groups warn that individuals will lose motivation to continue donating.

Private corporations also provide much-needed funding for parks through supportive partnerships managed by the National Park Foundation. Ford Motor Company, for example, generously funded rehabilitation of Glacier National Park's fleet of historic red buses for public transportation, including safety upgrades. The rehabilitation also converted the buses to clean-burning alternative fuels, which is good for visitors and the environment.

But donations do not always come without strings, and some parks have had to deal with the consequences of accepting donations for activities that

do not best meet the park's mission and goals, or facilities that the park must strain to find money to operate. Following a 2009 Government Accountability Office report that criticized some aspects of NPS's relations with partners, the agency put in place guidelines to ensure that donations, particularly for construction projects, do not result in unexpected costs in the long-term.

"It's a little out of balance when a federal agency finds it can only do the things Congress requires of it by going to the private sector to fill that gap. I think that there is a role for philanthropy, but there is also a role for proper federal funding, and there's a gap there."

— DWIGHT PICATHELY,
FORMER NPS CHIEF HISTORIAN
AS QUOTED IN THE PRESS

Recreational Fees

Recognizing the financial needs of the parks, Congress in 1997 created the vital Recreational Fee Demonstration Program. The program allows some parks to charge entrance and recreational fees and retain at least 80 percent of funds collected for use within that specific park. This program has made important contributions to addressing a number of backlog maintenance needs.

But not all parks charge fees, and smaller parks often are unable to collect significant sums even when they do charge fees. While the vast majority of Americans are happy to contribute to the upkeep of their parks, there is a question as to whether taxpayers should have to pay twice to visit the lands they own—once with their taxes and once at the gate.

LEFT PAGE (Left): SCA Crew Leader Luken Weaver helps rebuild Wonderland Trail, Stevens Canyon, Mt. Ranier. ©Susan Newman / NPS. **(Top Right):** Volunteer doing cleanup at Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens. ©NPCA **(Bottom Right):** Jo Suderman, Exhibit Specialist. ©Jim Peaco/NPS. **RIGHT PAGE (Top Left):** Visitors approach historic cabin, Cowpens National Battlefield (SC). © James Nations/NPCA **(Top Right):** Bob Evanoff on prescribed thistle burn in the grass triangle in Gardiner ©Jim Peaco/NPS. **(Bottom):** Visitors on horses at Grand Canyon. © James Nations/NPCA

Unmet Needs

For fiscal year 2012, the administration requested nearly \$40 million in base increases for 120 parks because of the tremendous value of even small investments in park operations. The request was funded in part by efficiencies through administrative cost savings.

These investments would yield improvements in law enforcement to protect visitor safety and prevent vandalism and theft in places including Hovenweep National Monument and Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Resources would be better protected through ecosystem restoration at Big Thicket National Preserve and repairs to historic structures at six national parks in Hawaii. And visitor services

would be improved in places like Cumberland Island National Seashore, where there is rapid population growth in the surrounding area. Visitor safety would be improved in places like Grand Teton National Park through increased ranger presence. And educational outreach would be improved at a few select parks.

While these requests are not likely to be funded in this economic climate, they demonstrate what this report should make clear: that there are ongoing needs in park operations worthy of investments to protect our national treasures and improve the tourist experience. An erosion of operations funding would only deepen these many needs.







CONCLUSION

Our nation faces great fiscal challenges. One of those challenges is avoiding the false economy of short-sighted cuts for the sake of cutting. The old admonition against being penny-wise and pound-foolish has rarely been more apt.

Some expenditures can be delayed: a driveway can always be repaved. But some things once lost are lost forever. Children of the inner city who miss a field trip to a national park—perhaps because not enough rangers were available—may miss the spark that ignites pride in our nation’s treasures. An unprotected archaeological site destroyed by looters—or just an archeological site that is never discovered—will never tell its story, and that history is lost forever. A forest poisoned by the residue of marijuana farming or denuded of key species will never be the same.

As Interior Secretary Salazar is fond of saying, in the most trying times of our nation, Congress and presidents have seen the need to hold on to the great places of this country: “Abraham Lincoln set aside the lands for what is now Yosemite during the civil war. Teddy Roosevelt became the nation’s wilderness warrior a century ago in the midst of economic strife. And Franklin Roosevelt created wildlife refuges and protection of lands to combat the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl.”

“If we intend to protect the national parks in perpetuity, basic finance tells us that we must fund them in perpetuity.”

— COMMISSIONER LINDA BILMES,
NATIONAL PARKS SECOND CENTURY
COMMISSION REPORT, 2009

“Failure to address budget shortfalls...may cause a decline in economic benefits generated by parks. Such a decline, involving the deterioration of natural and man-made assets of the system, could result in long-term economic losses to society far in excess of the budgetary savings from failing to fully fund the NPS budget.”

— JAY HARDNER AND
BRUCE MCKENNEY
*THE U.S. NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM:
AN ECONOMIC ASSET AT RISK*
NOVEMBER, 2006

Those trying times are with us again, and we must not fail to preserve the places that remind us what America was and is, and tell us who we are and can be.

Congress is currently faced with difficult decisions in reducing unsustainable deficits over the next ten years. But we are also in a recession, and cannot afford to forget that our national parks are as valuable an investment as America can make. Our national parks are providing affordable vacations for families of all income levels, they are coaxing visitors from overseas to make their vacation investments in the U.S., and they are supporting local economies with both

private-sector jobs and park service jobs.

National parks are protecting our history, the places where our ancestors gave their lives for freedom, where immigrants were invited to settle, where the struggle for civil rights is commemorated, and where our most celebrated natural wonders are protected. As a nation, we have preserved these places through our most challenging times. We must not undo that legacy.

Below: A couple enjoys a sunset picnic on the Blue Ridge Parkway's Waterrock Knob near Balsam, NC. ©Pat & Chuck Blackley





National Parks Conservation Association®
Protecting Our National Parks for Future Generations®