



*The Great American Outdoors Act is providing crucial funding – up to \$6.65 billion over five years – to fix our national parks’ crumbling roads, decaying buildings, outdated water systems and many more repair needs. This bill, along with other funding sources, is ensuring our parks can continue to welcome millions of visitors each year and protect the natural and cultural resources that tell our nation’s history.*

# New River Gorge NATIONAL PARK



**The nation’s newest national park, New River Gorge National Park and Preserve, was established in December 2020 in the scenic and storied Appalachian Mountains of southern West Virginia. The New River—a rugged, 53-mile, whitewater river flowing northward through deep and spectacular canyons—is among the oldest rivers on Earth, and it has carved the deepest and longest river gorge in the Appalachians.**

In its first year as a park, New River welcomed 1.6 million visitors, a 30 percent increase over 2019. Summer is the park’s busiest season; visitors come to hike, camp, raft the whitewater, and bike along former railroad grades and mountain bike trails. But the park is also popular for its breathtaking and dramatic scenery and its mosaic of habitats. One of the most visited locations is Grandview. On a clear day, from 1,400 feet, visitors can see directly into the heart of the park, including seven miles of the New River and its watershed.

**THE CHALLENGE: Abandoned, forsaken, non-historic buildings have become a maintenance burden and risk**

First established in 1978 as New River Gorge National River, the

park has acquired numerous strategic properties throughout the years, many of which include buildings that are in various states of disrepair. Several of the structures within developed areas are vacant and have become an unnecessary maintenance burden. Most of these houses, outbuildings, and shacks were never intended for Park Service use, and they have served no administrative purpose. They are now abandoned, failing, overgrown by vegetation, and hazardous to staff and visitors. Risks to entering these unmaintained structures include collapsing floors and roofs, rodent-transmitted diseases, and potential of fire. With no action taken, the condition of these buildings will only worsen. Forces of nature, trespassing, vandalism,

**BY THE NUMBERS:**



**\$1 million** investment from the GAOA to repair projects



**1.6 million** annual visitors



**53 miles** of whitewater river



**1400 foot** view

**PHOTOS:** Cover: ©Simply Photos/Shutterstock  
Back Left: ©New River Gorge  
Back Right: ©Steve Heap/Shutterstock





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theft, and other factors will further erode the stability of the buildings and further burden the park's maintenance and law enforcement resources.

**THE PROJECT**

Through an investment that is approximately \$1 million, the Great American Outdoors Act will fund the demolition of about 20 non-historic, deteriorating, and unsound structures and will restore nearby native plants. The first phase includes proper disposal of the demolition debris and a return of the sites to their natural condition. Selective plantings will help reintroduce native species to the disturbed areas. Unnecessary roads associated with these sites will be removed and restored to native contours, while other roads will be maintained where continued access to developed sites is necessary. The next phase involves disposal of additional structures and a focus on deteriorated utilities. The work is scheduled to begin in 2023 and is estimated to be completed in 2024.

In 2021, New River also received approximately \$280,000 in funding from the Great American Outdoors Act to rehabilitate 30 historic hearths and picnic shelters in the popular Grandview day-use area. Initially part of the West Virginia State Park System, Grandview's early infrastructure (including many of the hearths, entrance pylons, culverts, and Shelter 1 fireplace) was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The work on these masonry structures last year required the application of historic preservation techniques, including mortar repointing, stone and firebrick replacement, and the application of D/2 Biological Solution. This project was accomplished through a NPS Preservation Maintenance Action Team (MAT). These teams employ skilled and experienced tradespeople to address small to medium-sized historic and non-historic projects, including with the assistance of partners.

**THE IMPACT**

This project will remove hazardous structures from within the park's

boundaries and will restore the sites to a more natural condition. It will also address deferred maintenance, help eliminate attractive nuisances, and reduce operational costs. As a result, staff and financial resources will be better focused on higher priority assets within the park's inventory. Removal of these unnecessary structures that have no interpretive value and blight the land will also reduce the park's overall constructed footprint. Most importantly for the public, the restored sites have potential for expanded visitor recreation and enjoyment. The project will increase the natural resources and areas for recreation and education and will consequently improve the experience for those visiting New River today and for generations to come.



The Great American Outdoors Act is successfully repairing infrastructure at hundreds of parks across the country. However, with a nearly \$22 billion backlog, much more is needed. We urge Congress to extend the Legacy Restoration Fund for an additional five years.

Preserving Our Past.



Protecting Our Future.