

Glacier NATIONAL PARK

Glimmering from the spine of the Rocky Mountains in the northwestern corner of Montana, Glacier National Park is an adventure paradise, a showcase for melting glaciers, alpine meadows, carved valleys and pristine lakes.

Offering more than 700 miles of trails, abundant wildlife, backcountry camping and spectacular night skies, Glacier is among the country's most popular parks; it welcomes about 3 million visitors in the summer season alone, and the most popular trails average hundreds of hikers daily.

The famous Going-to-the-Sun Road, a designated National Historic Landmark, is not only one of Glacier's top attractions, but also the only roadway that provides an east-west link across the park. Going-to-the-Sun, which traverses the Continental Divide, is the primary roadway that park visitors use to access and enjoy scenic views, making it a critical transportation asset. Nearby, a bridge over McDonald Creek provides access to the Lake

McDonald District ranger station, a stock barn, major trailheads and a number of landowners.

THE CHALLENGE: a heavily visited park's primary roadway and nearby bridge are aging and unsafe

Going-to-the-Sun Road, which has numerous pullouts for trail and beach access, experiences a larger volume of traffic than any other area of the park. The pavement structure is more than 27 years old and road edge drop-offs are unsafe. The park can't add additional pavement thickness without impacting historic headwalls, drainage chutes and vegetation. Without addressing these issues, visitor safety along the road is compromised.

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funding – up to \$6.65 billion over five years – to fix our national parks' crumbling roads, decaying buildings, outdated water systems and many more repair needs.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.



BY THE NUMBERS:



\$21 million estimated investment from the GAOA for repair projects



270-foot-long clear span in the new bridge at McDonald Creek



9.3 miles of Going-to-the-Sun will be improved.



3 million visitors in the summer season alone



5,690 jobs supported by visitor spending at the park.

PHOTOS: Cover: ©Vaclav Sebek / Shutterstock.com
Back: Going-to-the-Sun Road ©Tristan Brynildsen / Shutterstock.com



The Upper McDonald Creek Bridge is 57 years old and in poor structural condition. Current load rating of the bridge prevents access of emergency vehicles and construction equipment, putting people and structures at risk—as experienced during recent wildland fires. The bridge is also inadequate for normal construction traffic and park administrative vehicles necessary to maintain the ranger station and other park facilities. Repairs over the years have resulted in improvements, but deterioration will continue despite the structure’s age, continued use and environmental conditions. If the bridge is not replaced, progressive failure will cause further load restrictions, and the bridge will eventually become unsafe for vehicle access and will need to be closed and/or removed for safety reasons.

THE PROJECTS

Through a \$21 million investment, the Great American Outdoors Act will rehabilitate Going-to-the-Sun Road and replace the bridge over McDonald Creek. The Going-to-the-Sun project will improve a 9.3-mile portion of the road from the foot of Lake McDonald to the intersection with the North Lake McDonald Road. Work will include curve widening, super-elevation on the horizontal alignment for transition zones, and addressing limited distances between curves. Pavement friction will be improved and traffic control devices will be enhanced. Also, fiber optic cable and conduit will be extended from outside of the park to serve Apgar

Village and park headquarters to support connection to future fiber optic service installed by the utility provider.

The McDonald Creek project will demolish the existing bridge and replace it with a 270-foot-long clear span. Demolition eliminates a seriously under-rated historic glulam bridge. The glulam girders have been compromised in the past by longitudinal cracking, which was repaired in the 2006/2007 winter. The projects are expected to be completed in 2024.

THE IMPACT

As a National Historic Landmark, Going-to-the-Sun Road is one of the park’s highest priorities for preservation and investment. These projects will promote the long-term preservation of this national treasure by completing the full road rehabilitation begun in 2006. With the road project,

Current load rating of the bridge prevents access of emergency vehicles and construction equipment, putting people and structures at risk—as experienced during recent wildland fires.

the pavement condition rating is expected to increase to 100, and the life of the roadway will extend by another 20-30 years. The new bridge will be 27-foot wide, single lane and in keeping with the historic character of the current bridge. It will have viewing sidewalks on both sides and will be rated for highway loads, capable to carry all types of vehicles. The bridge is expected to have a 50-70-year life.



The Great American Outdoors Act is successfully repairing infrastructure at hundreds of parks across the country. However, with a \$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.