



FACT SHEET

NPCA Fact Sheet on the Existing Funding Needs of America's National Parks

Summer 2007

America's national parks inspire us as a nation, teach our children about history and the wonders of the natural world, and aim to realize the dreams of our forefathers that "the parks contain the highest potentialities of national pride, national contentment, and national health." But to fulfill this intention, we must take immediate action to address the chronic funding shortfalls that are crippling the National Park Service's ability to serve as guardian of the nation's heritage.

To be sure, the Park Service does a great job with the limited funding available, and most visitors enjoy their vacations. But behind the scenes—and sometimes peeking through the curtain—is a growing litany of problems caused by chronic under funding. Without greater investment, a crippling annual operating shortfall, which is now approximately \$750 million, threatens America's national parks. We can no longer neglect our responsibility to act. The national parks represent America's heritage—our legacy to the future.

With the 100th birthday of the National Park System approaching in 2016, we have a prime opportunity to renew our commitment to these national treasures and reinvest in their protection to ensure a healthy, happy birthday for the park system and the dedicated park staff that inspire generations of Americans, and the world.

Examples of the critical needs of our national parks, sorted by state:

Denali National Park, Alaska

- Insufficient annual funding has forced the reduction of the park's seasonal staff. The park's road crew has dropped from 22 employees in 1996 to only one in 2007. As a result, the main road into Denali has suffered inadequate maintenance.
- The park's seasonal interpretive staff has also been reduced dramatically. In 2002, the park had 40 interpretative rangers; there are only 22 interpretive rangers working this summer. As a result, fewer visitors can enjoy programs that offer a compelling introduction to the park and a deeper appreciation for its inspiring wildlife.

Wrangell St. Elias National Park & Preserve, Alaska

- The Chitina Visitor Center, at the beginning of the McCarthy Road, the main entrance into the park, is now entirely staffed by volunteers because of funding shortfalls. Moreover, it is only open 2-6 p.m., four days per week!
- Although the Park Service has invested \$7 million in restoring the historic Kennecott Mine at Wrangell St. Elias, the park is \$850,000 short of what it needs to maintain the

newly-restored buildings, provide interpretive tours for the public, and maintain the trails that access the popular area.

- Budget shortfalls impair law enforcement activities at the park. For example, the ranger stationed in Yakutat cannot access the area he manages without relying on a private air taxi because park plane and boat access have been cut from the budget. As a result, the ranger has a harder time policing the area for illegal hunting and fishing activity because he is reliant on the private taxi that facilitates such activities!

Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona

- The Park Service can only maintain the Grand Canyon's extensive trail system, including some trails that are 100 years old, as problems arrive. They do not have the ability to do preventative trail maintenance. The Park Service's ability to clean restrooms and perform other maintenance needs in the park is also limited.
- The Tusayan Museum is closed weekends despite visitor demand.
- Limited funds prohibit better monitoring of archaeological sites within the canyon in conjunction with the release of water from Glen Canyon Dam.

Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, Arizona

- Expansive border patrol activities are degrading the rich and varied diversity of this park and increasingly, more resources are directed towards law enforcement requirements than resource protection and monitoring.

Saguaro National Park, Arizona

- The Park Service has lost much of its capacity over the last five years to remove invasive plant species from Saguaro National Park, which puts the park's namesake, the saguaro cactus, at risk from fire.
- The public exhibits in the Rincon Mountain District Visitor Center date from the construction of the building in the 1960s. These interpretive exhibits desperately need to be replaced in order to help educate the public about the natural history of the Saguaro and the value of the Sonoran Desert ecosystem.
- Additional funding and staff would enable the Park Service to maintain Saguaro's popular 185-mile trail system and respond to law enforcement needs, given the park's proximity to a growing urban area and the U.S. border.

Death Valley National Park, California

- The endangered Devil's Hole Pupfish, found only in Death Valley National Park, continues to suffer a population decline without funding to conduct groundwater monitoring, protection of rare aquatic habitats and removal of invasive species.
- Less than one percent of Death Valley National Park's 833,000 historic artifacts are on display for visitors to see. Storage conditions for these artifacts are inadequate, and may lead to the loss of significant cultural resources. Funding is needed to build storage facilities with proper environmental controls and add museum facilities that offer greater exhibit space.

Golden Gate National Recreation Area, California

- California's Bay Area national parks, including Golden Gate National Recreation Area, are one of the most visited in the park system, yet woefully lack the needed rangers to

patrol the parks' lengthy coastal boundaries and respond to the growing demands of homeland security while assisting visitors.

- A deadly mold is killing trees in California, causing a scourge called sudden oak death. Hikers are one way that this invasive mold is making its way into the backcountry of national parks such as Golden Gate, so the Park Service has set up boot-washing stations at trailheads to encourage visitors to clean their boots before hiking into the park. But for lack of funding, the Park Service struggles to maintain the appropriate signage. "Sometimes, visitors tear signs down, and it takes a while for the park to replace them," park staff told *Backpacker* magazine in May 2007. "It's a balancing act." In the meantime, the park's venerable oak trees are at risk.
- Golden Gate's San Mateo County land, covering more than 2,800 acres, contains an old growth redwoods site, a portion of a Biosphere Reserve, and significant archaeological resources, yet no funds have been provided to manage the site and ensure appropriate visitor use. Funding for five rangers are needed to curtail increasingly high levels of vandalism and erosion, and provide visitor education.
- Of the 53 miles of designated trails at Golden Gate, less than 50 percent are repaired on an annual basis.
- Less than 5 percent of visitors to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area have contact with a uniformed, Park Service staffer.
- Golden Gate National Recreation Area has an extensive museum and archival collection of over 4.9 million items (second largest such collection in the park system) that tell the cultural and historical story of the area. However, the Park Service lacks the professional expertise needed to care for and manage these artifacts due to insufficient funds.

Joshua Tree National Park, California

- Joshua Tree National Park is not able to fill 11 positions on its staff, including three interpretive rangers and two law enforcement rangers.
- The Cottonwood visitor center, serving Interstate 10 and the growing Coachella Valley at Joshua Tree National Park's southern boundary, is housed in a small, temporary structure that needs to be replaced with a permanent, larger facility that has visitor amenities and interpretive exhibits.
- Joshua Tree National Park and Mojave National Preserve stand to lose all or part of their Joshua Trees, a signature plant of the Mojave Desert, as the effects of climate change replace these ancient species with invasive weeds and grasses. Funding is needed to conduct an accurate mapping of Joshua Trees in the desert, do a more detailed climate change model, and begin active vegetation efforts to transplant Joshua Trees to habitats in areas in nearby national parks that will support the trees in the next 100 years and prevent the extinction of subspecies.
- Joshua Tree National Park, Death Valley National Park, and Mojave National Preserve all need "mine-safing" programs to seal off abandoned mines and reclaim surrounding land. In each park, hundreds of mine shafts and mine adits are accessible, dangerous, and lack warning signs. This threat to visitor safety is especially significant since all three parks lack enough rangers to adequately patrol and respond to emergencies.

Mojave National Preserve, California

- Mojave National Preserve, covering an area of 1.6 million acres, requires an additional 20 law enforcement rangers, 7 interpretive rangers, 6 firefighters, and 21 resource

management professionals to meet current staffing needs without any growth in future visitation.

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, California

- Budget shortfalls have a damaging effect on the maintenance operations at Sequoia National Park. This includes the inability to replace the failing potable water supply system, which is crucial to meeting structural fire suppression requirements and visitor and employee demands. This ancient water supply system is representative of the failing utilities systems throughout Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.
- Staffing shortages at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks contribute to the long list of deferred maintenance projects: rehabilitation of an aging infrastructure of trails, parking lots, roads, campgrounds, and utility systems. In addition to a shortage of funds, there is simply not enough staff to get these projects accomplished.

Yosemite National Park, California

- Lack of sufficient annual funding in Yosemite National Park contributes to staffing shortages. As a result, only 25 percent of Yosemite's 800 miles of trails receive trail maintenance each year. Traditionally run by Park Service rangers and employees, visitor centers cannot survive without volunteer help, with two facilities completely run by volunteers. Staffing shortages have also affected the availability of law-enforcement rangers. Current levels are equal to one ranger for every 120 square miles of parkland within Yosemite.
- The Park Service struggles to keep up with routine maintenance to utility systems, including the cleaning of grease traps and servicing pumps, simple tasks that are essential to preventing breakdowns from affecting the 3.6 million visitors that Yosemite hosts each year, and park resources.
- For lack of funding, the only grounds maintenance that will be performed to the 14 campgrounds, 13 picnic areas, 51 acres of lawns, 7 amphitheaters and 15 landscaped areas within Yosemite this year will be picnic table replacement.
- Some exhibits in the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center are more than 40 years old, with outdoor exhibits badly weathered and in some cases, no longer relevant. It's estimated that poor or broken interpretive exhibits annually affect 3.3 million visitors—a problem that Yosemite does not have sufficient funds or staff to fix. Yosemite has witnessed a decline in the number of ranger-led public education activities and a decline in the ability to provide free publications for visitors.

Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado

- For the last 10 years, Mesa Verde has charged a fee for interpretive visits to its prime cultural sites—this fee is now \$3 more than the park entrance fee.
- For lack of sufficient operating funds, the Park Service is forced to hire education staff for only four years—and then their positions are eliminated.
- With increased funding, Mesa Verde could provide conservation and restoration to 5,000 cultural sites, thereby allowing for more public access to the deteriorated sites now closed to the public.
- Subsequent to the fires at Mesa Verde, there has been a huge issue with invasive species overrunning the park's natural ecosystem. With a limited staff, the park struggles to manage this challenge, and cannot yet restore bighorn sheep to the park.

Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado

- Current staffing levels are not sufficient both to protect park resources and maintain quality visitor services. The number of full-time equivalent positions has not risen in proportion to the rate of increased visitation.
- Rocky Mountain also requires increased law enforcement staff to protect archaeological sites from vandals and looters.

Weir Farm, Connecticut

- Today, Weir's historic red farmhouse and studios need to be rehabilitated. Plans to move needed visitor services and maintenance operations nearby are stalled for lack of funding. The remaining artwork, brushes, and other elements of Weir's studio held by the heirs of Weir family will soon be for sale, but the National Park Service has neither the funds nor legal capability for purchasing this legacy.
- The outstanding support of the Weir Farm Trust, for example, helped establish the park in 1990, and today, offers education programs and events that engage and inspire contemporary artists of all ages. But even a first-rate cadre of staff and supporters can't do it all.

Biscayne National Park, Florida

- There are five resource positions unfilled, including a much-needed archaeologist to survey terrestrial and underwater resources.
- Four more experts are needed to catalog and display more than 4.5 million items in the museum collections of the four south Florida parks.

Everglades National Park, Florida

- Critical research needs are not being met at many south Florida national parks because important scientific staff positions remain unfilled. Approximately 25 scientist positions are currently unfilled at Everglades National Park, limiting their ability to evaluate restoration projects.

Haleakala National Park, Hawaii

- Increased funding would enable the Park Service to patrol the park's backcountry wilderness areas, protecting resources and providing emergency services for visitors.
- As many as 1,300 visitors enjoy sunrise atop the summit of Haleakala every morning, but funding shortfalls limit the ability of the Park Service to staff the site or offer interpretive programs.

Acadia National Park, Maine

- With additional funding, the Park Service could fill 15 vacant ranger positions, hire additional natural resources managers, including a botanist, to properly manage park resources, and finish re-furbishing and fully open the Schoodic Education and Research Center so it can serve Maine's schoolchildren and visiting scholars.

C&O Canal National Historical Park, Maryland

- In 1996, the canal park had 128 staff (full-time equivalents); today it has fewer than 86 staff. (This does not count staff paid with emergency flood money after 2 catastrophic floods damaged the park.)
- A financial analysis shows that the park has only about 35 cents for every dollar it needs for day-to-day operations, including routine maintenance and visitor safety.

- Fewer than 200 of the park's almost 1,400 historic structures are in good condition. Preservation maintenance takes a back seat to emergency repairs.

Glacier National Park, Montana

- Glacier National Park is currently short \$7 million annually. The park's deferred maintenance backlog is \$280 million and is expected to increase.
- Because of chronic funding shortfalls, the park struggles to maintain the Going to the Sun road, and historic structures such as the famed Many Glacier Hotel need extensive repairs.
- Three campgrounds that until last year offered visitors clean drinking water can no longer afford to do so.
- Important cultural, historic, and religious artifacts are susceptible to theft and vandalism.

Chaco Culture National Historical Park, New Mexico

- Chaco's experienced restoration experts are retiring and the park has insufficient funding to hire qualified, full-time staff to replace them.
- The park struggles to meet visitor demand for interpretive services, and worries about the potential strain of increased visitation that may result from nearby road construction.

Gateway National Recreation Area, New York & New Jersey

- Funding shortfalls are most apparent at Gateway National Recreation Area, which stretches across the Hudson's mouth from Jamaica Bay to Sandy Hook, New Jersey.
- Carved from a conglomeration of abandoned parkland, an airfield, harbor forts, and closed landfills, Gateway today is effectively shuttered. It has never been connected to the city by mass transit. A few scattered ball fields are inaccessible dustbowls, and nearly one hundred rotting historic buildings are strewn across the landscape.

Hamilton Grange National Memorial, New York

- The New York City home of founding father Alexander Hamilton is only open two days per week, and paint and plaster are peeling off of the walls.

Blue Ridge Parkway, North Carolina

- Chronic funding shortfalls at the Blue Ridge Parkway have resulted in staffing shortages, which impact the Park Service's ability to maintain cultural sites and ensure that park roads are properly maintained.
- Due to budget constraints, the park cannot fill 57 permanent positions—40 percent of them are resource management and planning, while 30 percent are maintenance. Top positions, such as Chief of Maintenance, Chief of Public Affairs, Chief of Interpretation, and Chief of Concessions cannot be filled.

Crater Lake National Park, Oregon

- As a result of its budget being eroded by fixed costs, Crater Lake had approximately 60 permanent employees in 1998, but only 51 of those jobs currently are filled. At the same time, the number of seasonal staff members has gradually dwindled.
- The superintendent told the media in February 2007 that the Administration's proposed budget increase would allow the park to hire an additional 14 seasonal workers.

Oregon Caves National Monument, Oregon

- For lack of sufficient operating funds, the park has no visitor protection capabilities and relies on strapped county services to keep the park and visitors safe from crime. Unfortunately, the county budget recently took a \$12-million hit, so sheriff patrols at the monument will be even scarcer. As a result, a vandal recently pulled out roughly 3,000 ft. of park telephone cable with the aim of reselling it—leaving the park without vital phone or Internet access for a month. Worse yet, the Park Service doesn't even have resources to properly investigate the crime.

Gettysburg National Military Park, Pennsylvania

- Using the park's current pending requests for additional operating dollars (OFS requests), they need an additional \$2,282,000 in operating dollars to meet their mission. Based on an overall budget of \$5.5 million, that's a 41 percent annual funding shortfall.
- 100-year-old cast-iron cannon carriages, which were placed on the battlefield by Civil War veterans, are deteriorating and collapsing, but the Park Service doesn't have sufficient staff to restore them.
- Many of the historic barns and homes in the park that once served as makeshift hospitals for Confederate and Union soldiers are deteriorating, but the Park Service lacks sufficient funding to restore them.
- Fewer than one in five visitors to Gettysburg National Military Park last year were able to participate in any kind of an interpretive program. Currently, many school groups are turned away from getting ranger-led park tours due to lack of staff.

Valley Forge National Historical Park, Pennsylvania

- A hub in the State of Pennsylvania's network of trails, Valley Forge has unfortunately for 20 years been unable to maintain its 27 miles of trails. The Park Service does not have sufficient funding to staff even a seasonal trail crew and have relied upon AmeriCorps, the Appalachian Mountain Club, and other volunteer groups to do work that was identified in the trails plan prepared by National Park Service Olmstead Center in 2003. Already, there are several long-distance trails connected to Valley Forge, with two more planned for the near future. This will only increase visitor use of the trails and push the Park Service further behind in both backlog and annual maintenance.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tennessee & North Carolina

- Chronic federal funding shortfalls have resulted in insufficient staff to maintain hiking trails, historic sites, and provide interpretive programs that engage park visitors.
- The park needs two additional full-time law enforcement positions to protect visitors and park resources, such as wildlife.
- Currently, 92 percent of the park's \$16-million budget goes toward staff salaries and essential services, leaving very little funding for additional park expenses such as addressing storm damage and updating interpretive materials.

Arches National Park, Utah

- Arches is short six staff to adequately protect the park's natural resources and engage visitors. The Park Service is so stretched that visitors are likely to only see rangers at the visitor center or on paved roads in the park. The Park Service cannot monitor the effects of backcountry campsites or provide adequate visitor interpretation.

Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah

- At current funding levels, the Park Service cannot afford to fill critical staff positions, including a geologist, biological technicians, additional law enforcement rangers, trail crew, custodians, and interpreters. There are no funds to complete a number of resource management plans.

Canyonlands National Park, Utah

- Canyonlands is short 16 staff to adequately protect the park's natural resources and engage visitors. According to NPCA's Center for State of the Parks assessment, the park struggles to monitor peregrine falcons, determine critical habitat needs for the Mexican spotted owl, control non-native vegetation at high priority sites, monitor desert bighorn sheep, and determine the conservation status of bats in the park.
- Right now, the Park Service is so stretched that visitors are likely to only see rangers at the visitor center or on paved roads in the park. The Park Service cannot monitor the effects of backcountry campsites or provide adequate visitor interpretation.
- As a result of insufficient funding, less than three percent of Canyonlands has been surveyed for archaeological sites. Without complete knowledge of the park's archaeological resources, the Park Service cannot properly protect sites from vandalism, weathering, and looting.

Zion National Park, Utah

- According to Zion's 2001 Business Plan, the park's operating budget falls short of what is needed for adequate resource protection and visitor services by \$3.5 million.
- Lack of funding for one-time projects means the Park Service cannot afford to restore parts of the Virgin River and associated riparian areas.
- Staffing shortfalls that result from insufficient funding have forced Zion to cut in half the number of popular guided trail walks and ranger talks given each day. Interpretive rangers are not longer available at trailheads and the Zion Lodge, and the Park Service must deny ranger programs to school groups.
- Funding shortages allow for only limited control of invasive weeds on 2,700 acres of priority habitat. Weed management treatments require follow-up and maintenance over a period of three to five years to be effective, and funding is often unavailable to complete these projects.
- None of the park's landscapes have been inventoried or evaluated for cultural landscape significance and cultural landscapes are not well interpreted for visitors.

Shenandoah National Park, Virginia

- Years of chronic funding shortfalls at Shenandoah National Park have resulted in critical staffing shortfalls, reducing the park's ability to uphold routine maintenance and meet public demand for interpretive programs.

Mount Rainier National Park, Washington

- The Park Service seasonal interpretive staff has been reduced by seven positions over the past several years. This is a 50 percent reduction. Consequently, there will be fewer interpretive programs in the park.
- The park's greenhouse will produce just 15,000 plants for meadow and site restoration, down from 70,000 plants in 2005.
- Insufficient funding for spare parts and repairs to vehicles and heavy equipment. The park's heavy equipment is old and needs replacing, and repairs are costly.

Olympic National Park, Washington

- For lack of sufficient operating funds, Olympic has six unfilled permanent positions. These positions include maintenance, budget management, and a plant biologist, who is needed to oversee re-vegetation, hazard tree removal (essential after extensive storm damage), and pesticide analysis.

Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho

- NPCA estimates that federal funding now covers only about 70 percent of Yellowstone's fixed costs. Because of chronic funding shortfalls, Yellowstone National Park can no longer plow a portion of the Beartooth Highway in Wyoming, called the most scenic highway in America.
- According to a 2006 report by the Government Accountability Office, "Decreasing law enforcement officers and emergency dispatching threaten Yellowstone National Park's round the clock 911 response."
- Entrance fees have risen and Yellowstone has even begun charging the public to participate in some popular ranger-led day hikes.