



Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

## FACT SHEET

### *National Parks in West Virginia*

Appalachian National Scenic Trail • Bluestone National Scenic River • Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park • Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network • Gauley River National Recreation Area • Harpers Ferry National Historical Park • New River Gorge National River

The natural beauty of West Virginia is captured in its national parks. The powerful rivers that cut through the state give visitors access to some of the country's most breathtaking scenery. Important parts of our history are preserved in Harpers Ferry and along the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal.

**Appalachian National Scenic Trail** - The Appalachian National Scenic Trail is a 2,167-mile footpath along the ridge crests and across the major valleys of the Appalachian Mountains from Katahdin in Maine to Springer Mountain in north Georgia. The trail enters West Virginia at Harpers Ferry and crosses into the state several more times along the Virginia-West Virginia border.

**Bluestone National Scenic River** - This scenic river preserves relatively unspoiled land in southern West Virginia and contains natural and historic features of the Appalachian plateau.

In its 11 miles, the lower Bluestone River offers excellent warm water fishing, hiking, boating, and scenery.

**Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park** - Follows the route of the Potomac River for 184.5 miles from Washington, D.C., to Cumberland, MD. The canal operated from 1828-1924 as a transportation route, primarily hauling coal from western Maryland to the port of Georgetown in Washington, D.C. Hundreds of original structures, including locks, lockhouses, and aqueducts, serve as reminders of the canal's role as a transportation system during the Canal Era. In addition, the canal's towpath provides a nearly level, continuous trail through the spectacular scenery of the Potomac River Valley enjoyed by thousands today

**Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network** - As the largest estuary in North America, the Chesapeake bay has touched and influenced much of the American story – early settlement, commerce, the military, transportation, recreation and more. The bay and its surrounding 64,000 square mile watershed hold a treasure trove of historic areas, natural wonders, and recreational opportunities. The Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network is a system of more than 120 parks, refuges, museums, historic



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communities and water trails in the bay watershed.

**Gauley River National Recreation Area** - The 25 miles of free-flowing Gauley River and the six miles of the Meadow River pass through scenic gorges and valleys containing a wide variety of natural and cultural features. The Gauley River contains several class V+ rapids, making it one of the most adventurous white water boating rivers in the east.

**Harpers Ferry National Historical Park** - Throughout its history, Harpers Ferry has been the backdrop for remarkable and unparalleled events. Here, in one setting, several themes in the American story converge: Native Americans, industry and transportation, African-Americans, John Brown, the Civil War, and the natural environment. The park includes more than 2,300 acres in the states of West Virginia, Maryland, and Virginia.

**New River Gorge National River** - A rugged, white water river, flowing northward through deep canyons, the New River is among the oldest rivers on the continent. Located in southern West Virginia, New River Gorge National River was established in 1978 to conserve and protect 53 miles of the New River as a free-flowing waterway. This unit of the National Park System encompasses over 70,000 acres of land along the New River between the towns of Hinton and Fayetteville.

### *Key Issues Facing National Parks in West Virginia*

Taking care of America's national parks should be a national priority. With the 100th birthday of the National Park System approaching in 2016, it is more important than ever to address the ongoing problems that our parks are facing. The National Park Service is suffering from an operations funding shortfall now exceeding \$800 million annually. In addition, several billion dollars are needed to protect archaeological sites and historic buildings, and repair the extensive backlog of maintenance projects. Many park friends in Congress have spent years highlighting the fiscal crisis in America's national parks. The Administration has responded with a budget request for 2008 that would increase the National Park Service operating budget by \$258 million -- a strong step in restoring our parks and improving the experiences of visitors. This budget also launches the National Park Centennial Challenge,

which if properly framed and enacted could help restore the parks for their 100th birthday and for generations to come. In addition to the operational shortfall, the National Park Service has a \$1.9 billion land acquisition backlog consisting of over 11,000 tracts of land and covering more than 1.8 million acres. In many instances, failure to acquire these lands makes operating the parks more complex and costly. Unfortunately, funding for national park federal land acquisition has declined dramatically in recent years, from \$130 million five years ago, to only \$23 million in the fiscal year 2008 request.

- A financial analysis shows that the C&O Canal National Historical 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.
- Due to lack of funding, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park has been unable to provide ranger-led interpretive tours to three of every four school groups that request them.
- Under the proposed fiscal year 2008 budget, the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network is threatened with elimination. This would severely hamper efforts to clean up the bay and to teach the public about its resources.

### *Park Visitation in West Virginia*

In fiscal year 2005, the national parks in West Virginia welcomed 4,600,338 visitors.

### *Budget Information*

In fiscal year 2006, the operations funding for the 7 national parks in West Virginia was \$23.5 million. For fiscal year 2008, the Administration is proposing a 10.8 percent increase, which would bring operations funding to \$26 million.

### *Contact Information*

For more information on the national parks in West Virginia, please contact NPCA Senior Regional Director Joy Oakes at 202-454-3386 or NPCA Legislative Director Blake Selzer at 202-223-6722, ext. 250.

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NPS Unit	FY03 Enacted	FY04 Enacted	FY05 Enacted	FY06 Enacted	FY07 Estimate	FY08 Requested	Change FY06-FY08	% Change FY06-FY08
Appalachian NST	1,034	1,024	1,137	1,205	1,217	1,341	136	11.3
Blue Stone NSR	68	68	70	71	72	73	2	2.8
Chesapeake & Ohio Canal NHP	8,298	8,371	8,890	8,979	9,106	10,024	1,045	11.6
Gauley River NRA	234	233	239	243	246	631	388	159.7
Harpers Ferry NHP	5,761	5,737	5,866	5,982	6,081	6,379	397	6.6
New River Gorge National River	6,830	6,790	6,952	7,067	7,156	7,640	573	8.1
<b>All West Virginia Parks</b>				<b>23,547</b>		<b>26,088</b>	<b>2,541</b>	<b>10.8</b>

All dollar amounts in thousands



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