

PRESERVING OUR NATIONAL PARKS



Our national parks have a special place in our country's life. Our parks are places of great natural beauty and history. As good stewards, we must leave them better than we found them. So I propose providing \$4.9 billion over five years for the upkeep of these national treasures.

President George W. Bush, February 27, 2001

The mission of the National Park Service is the same today as it was when established in 1916 – to conserve park scenery, wildlife, and natural and historic objects, and provide for their enjoyment in a manner that will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. Yet today, the Park Service faces challenges that could not have been imagined by the early managers of the park system. The visitation this year at Yellowstone National Park will exceed the visitation to the entire national park system in 1916. The infrastructure of the park system is aging and stressed by increasing visitor use and years of inadequate funding for maintenance. The magnificent natural resources of the parks are no longer remote sanctuaries and face heavy usage, invasion by non-native plants and animals, and other pressures.

To ensure a positive legacy of protecting natural, recreational, and cultural resources for Americans today and in the future, the 2002 budget provides increased resources to repair historic park structures and visitor facilities, and maintain good roads, safe trails, clean lakes and streams, and well-kept campgrounds. The 2002 budget also invests in active management of the extraordinary plant and animal heritage within the park system's 83 million acres.

ELIMINATING THE NPS MAINTENANCE BACKLOG

The Park Service manages 384 park units receiving over 285 million visitors annually. The infrastructure of the NPS is extensive and varied, including over 12,000 historic structures and other buildings; 8,500 monuments; 12,000 miles of trails; and over 4,000 employee housing units. Over time, much of this infrastructure has deteriorated. Many park facilities are historic structures. Others

were erected by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930's or constructed during the Mission 66 program in the 1950's and 1960's. Maintenance funding has not kept pace with the aging of the park infrastructure and increasing park visitation. The addition of new units to the park system has stretched available funding over a larger infrastructure base.

It is estimated that the current deferred maintenance backlog is roughly \$4.9 billion. An estimated \$2.2 billion of the backlog is attributable to NPS facility maintenance needs funded through the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act; \$2.7 billion is related to roads, bridges, and transportation projects funded through the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century.

DEFERRED MAINTENANCE ESTIMATE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (dollars in millions)	
Infrastructure	2,200
Roads and Bridges.....	<u>2,700</u>
Total	4,900

In order to meet President Bush's commitment to eliminate the NPS maintenance backlog over five years, the NPS budget request includes \$439.6 million for non-road projects. These funds are provided through a combination of appropriated funds and greater use of park fees to address maintenance project needs. This is almost a 30 percent increase over the amount directed to maintenance projects last year.

The Park Service plans to dedicate \$100.0 million from its recreation concession fee programs to deferred maintenance projects in 2002. The NPS estimates that the revenues from these programs will total \$179 million in 2002. This will still allow NPS to recover the costs of collection and provide funding from recreation fees for other visitor and resource programs.



Repair and rehabilitation projects are as varied as the units in the park system itself, from small but critical repairs that increase the safety of park visitors and park employees, to restoring sites that have played an important role in the Nation's

2002 INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (dollars in millions)	
Repair and Rehabilitation Projects...	75.3
Line Item Construction Projects	246.6
Housing Repair Projects	15.0
Dam Safety Projects.....	<u>2.7</u>
Subtotal, Budget Authority.....	339.6
Recreation Demonstration and Concessions Fees	<u>100.0</u>
Total, Infrastructure Funding	439.6

history. Typical projects planned for 2002 include: replacing deficient guardrails at the Blue Ridge Parkway; replacing a failing water line at Petrified Forest National Park; and repairing utilities at Point Reyes National Seashore. Historic structures will be restored at Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site and critical preservation work will be completed on the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. In selecting projects, NPS has given priority to actions that protect public health and safety, address environmental problems, or enhance the preservation of natural resources.

Because TEA-21 is not subject to reauthorization until 2004, the 2002 budget defers decisions on increased park road funding and assumes the existing TEA-21 funding level, \$165 million annually, continues through 2003.

IMPROVING MAINTENANCE MANAGEMENT

The lands and resources of the national park system are a valuable Federal investment. It is important that the American people be assured that the maintenance needs are accurately catalogued and prioritized. Accordingly, as NPS is accelerating deferred maintenance work in the parks, NPS will institute reforms to increase accountability for re-

Deferred Maintenance Project at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument

The Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument campground water line, which runs nearly two miles from the well head, will be replaced to avoid recurring water line breaks in



the campground and residence area which have resulted in two positive coliform water samples. The Monument was placed on notice of acute violation by the State of Arizona in January, 1997, and was asked to place notices at all sites of public visitation. While systematic manual chlorination and monitoring has been occurring since the violation notices, controlled amounts of chlorine are impossible to attain without the new automated chlorination system that also will be installed as a result of this project. The new pipe will be buried 24 inches to insulate the water from warming so much on the hot summer days (115°F). Because of increased visitation, the supply line will be increased from two inches to four inches and will assist the fire suppression capability for the 213 campsites, two residences, and seven comfort stations. The cost of this project is \$498,000. No emergency source of water for the Monument exists if the current water system becomes contaminated.

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sults. Perhaps the most challenging task ahead is that related to defining and quantifying more accurately the extent of the facilities backlog. The current backlog estimate represents only those projects that have been developed by park units and reviewed and approved at the regional and Washington office levels. Further analysis could identify additional deferred maintenance needs.

The Park Service is, however, making progress toward accurately quantifying the backlog on several fronts. To ensure consistency and focus on the most critical projects first, parks are for the third consecutive year using common maintenance definitions and uniform criteria for priority ranking of the most needed health and safety and resource protection projects.

In addition, the request provides a total of \$7.2 million to accelerate two key projects critical to eliminating the backlog and ensuring accountability for results. Included in this amount are increases of \$1.7 million for the implementation of the NPS comprehensive facility maintenance management

system in park units and \$2.5 million to continue comprehensive assessments to collect detailed information on NPS assets and the progress made in moving the condition of assets from poor to good condition.

Given the extent of the national park system and the age of the facilities, it is likely that maintenance needs will no doubt continue to emerge. However, by addressing the known backlog now



and improving capability and accountability, this five year funding initiative will lower the parks' infrastructure needs to a sustainable and manageable level in furtherance of the President's goal.

NPS NATURAL RESOURCE CHALLENGE

In order to preserve and restore the rich natural heritage found in the national park system, it is important to have a strong understanding of the plants, animals, and ecosystems, as well as the potential impacts of human development, including habitat destruction, non-native species, pollution, and the pressures caused by increased visitation. Knowledge about these complex relationships is essential for sound management.

The Natural Resource Challenge is a multi-year program designed to improve the management of natural resources in the parks by increasing the capacity for the collection and use of information. Through collaborative research efforts with the U.S. Geological Survey and local universities, the parks will be able to better assess natural resources and ameliorate potential threats. The research is conducted by resource management specialists in individual park units in conjunction with the scientific community. The Challenge focuses on increasing scientific information for decisionmaking; building capability to develop and implement solutions to resource prob-

lems; and fostering creative uses of partnerships for developing information useful to parks and making parks useful for others.

Much of the funding for the Natural Resource Challenge is allocated through a competitive process. Proposals are peer reviewed, ensuring that only high priority, well-planned projects receive funding. In addition, all major project funding requires an approved study plan before funds are released, and progress and completion reports are required. In many cases, parks with similar natural resource concerns can share specialists to address an issue such as air and water quality, invasive plants, or non-native animals. This limits the potential for duplication of staff, yet provides the parks access to natural resource specialists.



The 2002 budget request includes a total of \$49.5 million for the Natural Resource Challenge, an increase of \$20.0 million over 2001. This increase will be dedicated to a wide array of projects and activities, including the management of non-native or invasive species. The budget supports the creation of additional field teams for non-native species management, building on the success of teams established in 2000. The team approach is par-

ticularly helpful for smaller parks that do not need full time park-based staff, but can benefit from specialists with professional resource management skills. Other projects will address monitoring needs for endangered species with approved recovery plans.

The President and I will work to eliminate the National Park Service's maintenance backlog with nearly \$5 billion over five years to fix our national treasures and protect our wild places so more families across America can enjoy them.

Secretary Gale A. Norton, March 14, 2001