

PRESERVING AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL



...the National Park System, which began with the establishment of Yellowstone National Park in 1872, has since grown to include superlative natural, historic, and recreation areas in every region...

General Authorities Act of 1970

In total, the Department of the Interior manages 507 million acres, over one-fifth of the United States. A top priority for the President and the Secretary is the conservation of great wild places and unspoiled landscapes. The National Park Service manages some of the most unique and precious areas, including grand vistas such as the 1.2 million-acre Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona and the 2.2 million-acre Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. The NPS also preserves important historic and cultural records. Parks such as Keweenaw National Historical Park, located on the shores of Lake Superior, preserve important cultural and historic records in order to educate future generations.

The national park system attracts more than 285 million visitors annually, and visitation at Yellowstone National Park, alone, exceeds the visitation of the entire system in 1916. To ensure a positive legacy of protecting natural, recreational, and cultural resources for Americans today and in the future, the 2003 budget provides increased resources to repair historic park structures and visitor facilities, protect spectacular landscapes, and preserve and restore natural resources. The 2003 budget proposes increased funding to conserve the natural treasures in our national parks and to eliminate the maintenance backlog.

MANAGING THE PARK MAINTENANCE BACKLOG

President Bush made a pledge to address the backlog of maintenance and repair in the national park system. The vast array of infrastructure managed by NPS includes over 13,000 historic structures and other buildings; 8,500 monuments; 12,000 miles of trails; and over 5,000 employee housing units. These assets are located in 385 units. Over the years, maintenance funding has not kept pace with increasing park visitation and

the aging of this vast infrastructure; therefore, much of this infrastructure has deteriorated. The addition of new units to the park system has also stretched available funding over its extensive and varied infrastructure base.

Secretary Norton shares the President's commitment to maintaining park facilities to safeguard the visiting public and park employees, to safe-

Our parks are places of great natural beauty and history. As good stewards, we must leave them better than we found them.

President George W. Bush, February 27, 2001

guard park resources, and to improve visitors' experiences. The 2003 request includes \$663.0 million for facility maintenance and construction, including required planning and compliance work. Within the total is an additional \$25.0 million for the cyclic maintenance program to ensure that routine maintenance work is done in a timely and less expensive fashion. In addition, the budget request includes a \$17.6 million increase for the repair and rehabilitation program. This increase will be focused primarily on moving NPS towards



performance-based management of its facilities maintenance program through comprehensive condition assessments, continued implementation of the computerized facility maintenance software system, and timely accomplishment of the highest priority rehabilitation projects.

Within the increase for repair and rehabilitation, \$8.4 million will address the deferred maintenance and critical resource protection backlog. In 2002, approximately one-fifth of the repair and rehabilitation program was devoted to critical resource protection. A similar amount will be devoted to this effort in 2003. An increase of \$7.6 million in repair and rehabilitation will allow NPS to accelerate comprehensive inventory, condition, and needs assessments of NPS facilities. Scheduled condition assessments are essential in order to monitor the effectiveness of the NPS maintenance program and provide NPS managers a means to detect potential problems and prevent

further facility deterioration. The NPS is currently in its second year of performing condition assessments. Initial condition assessments of all parks should be completed by the end of 2003.

An increase of \$1.6 million for the facility maintenance software system will increase the number of parks that have access to and are trained to use FMSS, allowing NPS to track maintenance needs more accurately and realistically estimate the cost of maintaining NPS facilities. The data from the condition assessments will be stored in FMSS for use as a management tool by park managers.

Data collected from condition assessments and managed through the FMSS will allow NPS to develop performance measures that chart its progress toward reducing the deferred maintenance backlog while assisting park managers as they determine how best to allocate their resources. Parks will develop facility condition indices that quantify the condition of a structure, allowing park managers to determine when it is more cost effective to replace, rather than repair, a structure; and to evaluate objectively the condition of a facility. In 2001, NPS established facility condition indices for its roads and bridges and established performance measures that use these indices to measure progress toward achieving maintenance goals. During 2002, NPS will develop facility



condition indices for a number of parks. These indices will aid in formulation of the President's 2004 budget. The NPS will work toward completion of facility condition indices and performance goals for other parks by the end of 2003.

In addition to the requested annual appropriations, NPS will devote a significant amount of recreational demonstration fee receipts toward deferred maintenance projects. The program is now authorized through 2004. The 2003 budget proposes that the program be permanently authorized. The recreation fee program provides land management agencies with the authority to retain the revenue raised for local management purposes. Federal land managers have used revenues to meet management goals for facility maintenance, health and safety, visitor service, and resource protection in an effective, efficient, and accountable manner.

Given the extent of the park system and the age of the facilities, it is likely that maintenance needs will continue to emerge. However, by increasing preventative maintenance funding, addressing the current backlog, and improving its performance-based management capability and accountability, NPS will be better able to manage its maintenance needs to fulfill the President's goal.

NATURAL RESOURCE CHALLENGE

The Natural Resource Challenge is a Presidential and Secretarial priority that creates a framework for measuring the performance of the National Park Service in fostering the preservation of natural resources within the boundaries of national parks. The design of the challenge fully supports the Secretary's Four C's of conservation through cooperation, consultation, and communication by fostering extensive interaction with entities outside of NPS. Collaborative research efforts with the U.S. Geological Survey and universities assist the parks in the assessment of natural resources and help to identify and alleviate potential threats to these resources. Resource management specialists in individual park units follow-up and use the results of research in conjunction with the scientific community. The Natural Resource Challenge focuses on increasing scientific information for decisionmaking; building capability to develop and implement solutions to resource problems;

and fostering creative uses of partnerships for developing information useful to parks and making parks useful for others. Increased knowledge of the complex ecological relationships that exist among plants, animals, and humans is essential for sound management of the amazing diversity held within the boundaries of our national parks.

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; progress and completion reports are also required. In many cases, parks that have similar natural resource concerns can share specialists to address an issue of particular concern to the parks such as air and water quality or invasive plants. This sharing limits the potential for duplication of staff, yet provides the parks access to natural resource specialists.

The 2003 request includes a total of \$67.5 million for the Natural Resource Challenge, an increase of \$18.0 million over 2002. With this funding, NPS will monitor resource health at 52 parks. With this proposal, NPS will establish "vital signs," such as



The Natural Resource Challenge will allow us to deal with the environmental aspects of our parks, with the scientific aspects, so that we can fund on-the-ground restoration work.

Secretary Gale A. Norton, April 24, 2001

nitrogen levels in streams or populations of waterbirds, which will effectively demonstrate any changes to the health of the resources. The increase will also fund activities to manage and monitor native and non-native species and allow NPS to complete all resource inventories by 2008, two years earlier than previously planned.

Of the funds provided for the Natural Resource Challenge, NPS will contract with USGS for \$9.0 million to conduct related research, including de-

termination of basic geologic and water resource inventories, vegetation mapping, and assessment of watershed conditions. This collaboration with USGS will improve the ability of the Park Service to meet several of its performance measures. These measures include increasing the number of parks that have identified vital signs for natural resource monitoring; improving the status and stabilizing populations of threatened and endangered species; assessing aquatic resource conditions; and containing exotic vegetation.

Fulfilling the Promise – Everglades Restoration

In early January 2002, the Everglades Coalition convened its annual meeting in South Florida to discuss one of the most significant issues of concern to the Interior Department: the restoration of the Everglades.

The theme of this year's meeting, Fulfilling the Promise, reflects the move from what was once a concept, to what is now actual implementation of a decades-long collaborative effort to restore the natural ecological systems of the Everglades, while ensuring achievement of other water-related needs in South Florida. This region provides a high quality of life for six million residents, and supports outstanding natural resources and a vibrant and diverse economy encompassing significant tourism, agriculture, and commercial fisheries interests.

As stewards for about one-half of the remaining Everglades, Interior is a major partner in the restoration of the Everglades. Under the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan enacted into



law just over a year ago, the Department has the vital role of providing technical expertise in ensuring the objectives of CERP are met and that appropriate quantities of clean water are distributed at the right times and in the right places to restore this unique, internationally recognized treasure. Interior also plays a key role in other efforts that benefit the Everglades ecosystem. The 2003 budget includes \$96.0 million for Everglades programs. Within this total, Interior will dedicate continued funding of \$8.9 million for direct CERP implementation.

The 2003 budget reflects the significant progress that has already been made towards completion of the modified water delivery project. Authorized in 1989 to restore more natural water flows to the Everglades National Park, the modified water delivery project is funded at \$13.3 million. As a result of successful cooperation with the Army Corps, the State, and other parties to accomplish this important project, this

year's funding need is \$21.9 million below last year. Completion of this project, coupled with completion of land acquisition at Everglades National Park, will provide much needed flexibility to water managers and be a base for future efforts.

The Everglades restoration project also continues funding to support wildlife and habitat goals for the Everglades project. Interior will devote \$9.1 million for Federal land acquisition efforts in South Florida in 2003, including \$6.3 million for acquisition at wildlife refuges. For example, FWS will acquire 215 acres of prime key deer habitat on the National Key Deer Refuge.

In addition, the 2003 budget includes \$20.0 million for a matching grant to the State of Florida, an increase of \$5.0 million over last year, to continue the purchase of important properties within the Everglades system. These acquisitions are vital to the goal of securing additional fresh water and restoring natural hydrological flow. This program provides a strong Federal-State partnership to leverage funds for restoration.

In 2003, the Critical Ecosystem Studies Initiative will be funded in USGS as it undertakes the long-term role of monitoring, assessing, and providing ongoing science support that are essential elements of the adaptive management concept for Everglades restoration.