



**National Trust for
Historic Preservation**
Save the past. Enrich the future.

**SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS
366 DIRKSEN SENATE HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON S. 3172, THE RESTORE OUR PARKS ACT
JULY 11, 2018
COMMENTS OF THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

Chairman Daines, Ranking Member King, and members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to share the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s perspectives on the Restore Our Parks Act (S. 3172) that addresses the National Park Service’s maintenance backlog. My name is Pam Bowman and I am the Director of Public Lands Policy.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a privately-funded charitable, educational and nonprofit organization chartered by Congress in 1949 in order to “facilitate public participation in historic preservation” and to further the purposes of federal historic preservation laws.¹ The intent of Congress was for the National Trust “to mobilize and coordinate public interest, participation and resources in the preservation and interpretation of sites and buildings.”² With headquarters in Washington, D.C., nine field offices, 27 historic sites, more than one million members and supporters and a national network of partners in states, territories, and the District of Columbia, the National Trust works to save America’s historic places and advocates for historic preservation as a fundamental value in programs and policies at all levels of government.

We appreciate the Committee scheduling this hearing to discuss this legislative proposal to address the National Park Service’s maintenance backlog and thereby preserve the ability for Americans and visitors to enjoy and experience iconic historic resources and natural wonders on federal lands. The National Trust strongly endorses this legislation and the following comments supplement those we previously submitted to the Senate Energy and Natural Resource Committee on April 17, 2018.

The Need

The National Park System is one of our nation’s best ideas – a network of 417 parks and sites that protect spectacular historic, cultural, and natural resources and tell the stories of remarkable people and events in our country’s history. The National Park Service (NPS) is responsible for maintaining a system comprised of more than 84 million acres across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and many U.S. territories.

The National Park System tells an incredible story at sites as diverse as Gettysburg National Military Park, the Statue of Liberty, Shenandoah National Park, the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historical Park, and Native American cultural sites like those at Chaco Culture National Historical Park and Mesa Verde National Park. National parks, and the historic and cultural sites they protect, are some of our nation’s most popular attractions and were visited by

¹ 54 U.S.C. §§ 312102(a), 320101.

² S. Rep. No. 1110, 81st Cong., 1st Sess. 4 (1949).

over 330 million people last year. In 2015 alone, these millions of visits generated visitor spending of an estimated \$16.9 billion in nearby communities – spending that supported 295,300 jobs and provided a \$32 billion boost to the national economy.

The size and complexity of the NPS infrastructure and the importance of preserving our parks' invaluable resources represent a significant challenge. Unfortunately, after 100 years of operation and inconsistent public funding, the National Park System faces a deferred maintenance backlog estimated at \$11.6 billion, and according to FY 2017 data, 47% of the backlog is attributed to historic assets.³

Deferred maintenance in our national parks puts historic and cultural sites at risk of permanent damage or loss, and in the absence of funding, the condition of these assets will continue to deteriorate and become more expensive to repair and preserve in the future. Some of the National Park Service's most significant historic sites are at risk of falling into disrepair. For example, the Statue of Liberty National Monument in New York Harbor, which includes Ellis Island – an iconic symbol of American freedom and immigration – has repair needs of over \$160 million.

Legislative Solution

The NPS maintenance backlog of \$11.6 billion demonstrates that additional investments and new strategies are necessary if NPS is to meet their stewardship responsibilities. We are encouraged by the many statements of support by Secretary Zinke, members of this subcommittee, and others for reducing the maintenance backlog and prioritizing this issue as part of policy proposals to make investments in our nation's infrastructure.

The National Trust has worked closely with many stakeholders—including The Pew Charitable Trusts and National Parks Conservation Association—on a legislative solution that would provide dedicated funding to address the maintenance backlog. We strongly endorse the bipartisan Restore Our Parks Act (S. 3172) introduced by Senators Portman, Warner, Alexander, and King that we believe makes a substantial and meaningful investment in our national parks. Further, we are pleased the legislation provides dedicated funding financed by unobligated federal mineral revenues in such a way that allocations to the Land and Water Conservation Fund and Historic Preservation Fund are not impacted. The National Trust is a strong supporter of both these programs and believes that both should receive the dedicated funding they have long been promised.

We appreciate the many months of collaborative and bipartisan efforts from members of Congress in the House and Senate on the many other legislative and policy proposals to address the NPS maintenance backlog, including Senators Warner and Portman and Representatives Hurd, Kilmer, Reichert, and Hanabusa for their work on the National Park Service Legacy Act, which to-date has secured 21 Senate and 79 House cosponsors. The leadership and support for these proposals makes a significant contribution to the legislation being discussed today.

As this subcommittee considers legislation to address deferred maintenance needs of the National Park Service, we endorse the following elements that in particular would successfully address these challenges:

Reliable and Dedicated Funding

³ National Park Service data, FY2017

A reliable, dedicated federal funding source distinct from annual appropriations is necessary to address the maintenance backlog, along with providing sufficient staffing capacity to ensure that we preserve historic sites, maintain buildings and infrastructure in safe condition, and keep our parks open and accessible. The Restore Our Parks Act provides such dedicated funding through receipts from onshore and offshore energy development, as well as renewables, that are not otherwise allocated to other purposes. This legislation would guarantee contributions towards reducing the maintenance backlog with the potential of \$1.3 billion annually over the next five years. We believe any legislative solution should include reliable and dedicated funding and provide certainty for park units about the availability of funds for high priority projects.

Priorities for Maintenance Projects

The National Trust strongly supports a provision in the Restore Our Parks Act that provides funding parity between non-transportation and transportation-related maintenance needs, which ensures that funds are available for the preservation of historic structures and cultural artifacts. Many of the large projects included in the NPS backlog are transportation-related and will require significant investments.

For example, several of the road systems at Yellowstone National Park have an estimated maintenance cost of at least \$850 million⁴. With limited annual allocations to a dedicated fund for the maintenance backlog and additional funding for transportation projects available through the Highway Trust Fund, a provision to ensure funding parity will ensure that the maintenance needs of historic and cultural assets are also addressed.

We also believe that congressional appropriations providing sustained and robust funding levels for Repair and Rehabilitation, Cyclic Maintenance, and Line-Item Construction are needed to alleviate the maintenance backlog and ensure adequate preservation and protection of resources in our parks. After years of level funding or modest increases for both Repair and Rehabilitation and Cyclic Maintenance, we were pleased to see meaningful increases over the past three years so that, taken together, these accounts received about \$100 million more in FY18 than they did in FY15. Similarly, we are pleased to see the combined increase for these two accounts of \$40 million in the House Interior Appropriations bill and the more modest increase of \$15 million in the Senate Interior Appropriations bill. As Congress considers FY19 funding levels, we believe that additional investments in these key accounts will contribute to the successful preservation of historic sites and other resources in the National Park System.

The nation faces a challenging fiscal environment, and the National Trust recognizes there is a need for fiscal restraint and cost-effective federal investments. We do not believe that a successful solution to address the maintenance backlog can omit significant and reliable financial investments.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to present the National Trust's perspectives on these issues, and we look forward to working with the committee, Administration, and other key stakeholders as you consider policy proposals to address the deferred maintenance backlog. We hope that these critical investments continue to sustain our nation's rich heritage of cultural and historic resources that generate lasting economic vitality for communities throughout the nation.

⁴ National Park Service, "Yellowstone National Park Road Reconstruction"
https://www.nps.gov/transportation/pdfs/Yellowstone_Roads_Reconstruction-022016.pdf; February 2016