

**STATEMENT OF P. DANIEL SMITH, DEPUTY DIRECTOR EXERCISING THE AUTHORITY OF THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS, OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, EXAMINING THE SPENDING PRIORITIES AND MISSION OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

**April 3, 2019**

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Chairwoman Haaland, Ranking Member Young, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today at this hearing on spending priorities and mission of the National Park Service (NPS) as reflected in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 President's budget request.

**FY 2020 Introduction and Budget Summary**

The FY 2020 President's budget request proposes total discretionary appropriations of \$2.7 billion for the NPS. The request continues delivery of mission critical activities and advances Administration priorities. These priorities include ensuring the American public continues to have an enriching national park experience, improving public access for outdoor recreation, and investing in park infrastructure. The request also includes an estimated \$733.4 million in mandatory appropriations. In total, the request includes budget authority of \$3.5 billion.

The FY 2020 budget supports continued stewardship of resources of national significance and provision of enriching experiences and enjoyment for visitors. The President's budget ensures that national parks continue to serve visitors who come every year to relax and recreate in America's great outdoors and learn about the people and places that make up America's story.

The budget includes \$321.6 million for natural and cultural resource stewardship. National parks are critical venues for the conservation of natural resources and play a unique role as places to apply adaptive management strategies. The budget supports the conservation of natural resources by funding projects and programs that promote or control native and invasive species, combat disease to preserve species and ecosystems, mitigate impacts to resources through conservation restoration and research, restore native lands, and control wildfire fuels through vegetation management.

The budget also emphasizes the importance of and commitment to addressing the deferred maintenance backlog faced by nearly every park across the country. The FY 2020 budget includes \$796.8 million for facility operations and maintenance, including \$132.0 million for Repair and Rehabilitation projects and \$134.1 million for Cyclic Maintenance projects. The 2020 budget also includes a proposal to establish a multi-agency Public Lands Infrastructure Fund to address the backlog of deferred maintenance on public lands, including NPS lands.

In 2018, for the fourth consecutive year visitation to America's national parks exceeded 300 million, totaling 318 million visitors. The 2020 budget supports ongoing efforts to offer a rewarding national park experience and provide affordable and accessible recreational opportunities. Communities surrounding national parks benefit from sustained high visitation by

way of increased economic activity generated by visitor and employee spending, both directly (e.g. hotels, restaurants, gas stations, etc.) and indirectly (e.g. hotel and restaurant suppliers, etc.). In 2017, the most recent data available, visitors spent an estimated \$18.0 billion in local gateway regions, supporting more than 306,000 jobs, with \$35.8 billion in economic output to the national economy.

National parks provide recreational opportunities for hunters and anglers as well as campers and hikers. To assist in these efforts, the 2020 budget includes \$10.0 million to support and enhance recreational opportunities at parks, including \$1.5 million to support veteran employment programs through Veteran Fire Corps conducting active forest management work; \$1.0 million for a traditional trades apprenticeship program for veterans teaching historic preservation; \$2.0 million to invest in a Service and Conservation Corps to improve recreation-related infrastructure; \$1.2 million to increase accessible hunting and fishing opportunities through a series of fishing events that would engage volunteers, including veterans, to teach junior anglers how to fish; \$1.0 million to build and/or retrofit accessible hunting blinds and fishing piers; and \$300,000 to support Alaska Native subsistence programs. The recreational access proposal also includes \$3.0 million to promote lesser known park sites within the tourism industry and build partnerships to market the recreation opportunities available at all national park units.

The request includes \$6.3 million to support parks with rising visitation enhance the visitor experience and ensure visitor safety. Funding will expand capacity in the areas of interpretation and education, park protection, and facility operations and maintenance, where demands on capacity within parks in terms of staffing and facility upkeep are most pressing. Parks experiencing the most significant increase in visitation include Great Smoky Mountains, Grand Canyon, Glacier, and Acadia National Parks.

The 2020 budget also requests \$4.0 million for on-the-ground active forest management necessary to reduce the wildfire risk to NPS infrastructure and resources and increase safety for firefighters and the public. Parks with the highest priority needs include Great Smoky Mountains, Crater Lake, Sequoia and Kings Canyon, and Yellowstone National Parks.

Addressing deferred maintenance in our national parks is critical to the NPS core mission and is a top priority of the Administration. The NPS 2018 deferred maintenance asset inventory summary report estimates there is \$11.9 billion in deferred maintenance needs in the parks including buildings, roads, trails, and other assets under NPS care. The 2020 budget continues to prioritize maintenance fund sources for infrastructure projects that address deferred maintenance, health and safety concerns, and resource preservation that are financially sustainable.

The FY 2020 budget includes \$4.0 million for new parks including Camp Nelson National Monument; Ste. Genevieve National Historical Park; and the Birmingham Civil Rights, Freedom Riders, and Reconstruction Era National Monuments. Funding would also support increased security at Independence National Historical Park and Cesar E. Chávez National Monument, and provide for a newly implemented locality pay adjustment in three areas of the country.

## **Operation of the National Park System**

The Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) appropriation funds the operations of our 419 parks and related programs. The 2020 budget proposes ONPS funding at \$2.4 billion. The request for operations includes several notable proposals. These include the \$10.0 million for recreational access opportunities, \$6.3 million to support parks with rising visitation, \$4.0 million for active forest management, and \$4.0 million for new park responsibilities, as described above. In addition to these, the budget requests \$5.7 million for the reorganization of the Department of the Interior to implement the 12 unified regions and modernize Interior's administrative services. The budget also requests \$5.0 million to be provided for the National Park Foundation to promote public-private partnerships for the benefit of the national park system. The budget proposes \$2.3 million in law enforcement and health and safety increases to support the U.S. Public Health Service commissioned officers to ensure the safety of food, water, and wastewater systems provided in our national parks; to increase tactical support for fire suppression through the use of drones; and allow for additional law enforcement rangers to attend basic training – a step toward reducing the backlog of 200 rangers waiting to enter the training program. The budget also requests \$1.2 million in recurring funding for the timely replacement of the U. S. Park Police helicopter fleet. The budget also includes \$5.5 million for the increase to the D.C. water and sewer bill and \$5.9 million in net increases to External Administrative Costs including space rental, unemployment compensation, telecommunications and postage, and other departmental program changes.

### **Centennial Challenge**

The National Park Service Centennial Act (P.L. 114-289), enacted in 2016, established a permanent National Park Centennial Challenge Fund. Amounts exceeding \$10.0 million from the sale of age-discounted Federal Recreational Lands Passes, commonly known as Senior Passes, are deposited into this Fund as offsetting collections to be used as the Federal match for projects or programs that enhance the visitor experience. The budget estimates deposits into this Fund will be \$1.4 million in FY 2020. As all Federal funds must be matched on at least a 50:50 basis, private donations will leverage the Federal funds for a total of at least \$2.8 million.

### **National Recreation and Preservation**

The National Recreation and Preservation appropriation funds programs that support local and community efforts to preserve natural and cultural resources. The FY 2020 budget includes \$32.3 million.

The budget provides \$11.2 million for Natural Programs, including \$9.1 million for Rivers, Trails, and Conservations Assistance (RTCA) programs. RTCA will continue to enhance outdoor recreation access and provide technical assistance for projects in more than 800 communities. Other programs within this appropriation will provide support for managers of National Natural Landmarks, ensure recreation and conservation enhancements where possible in developing new hydropower, and assist in the transfer of unneeded/surplus Federal property to States and communities for public parks and recreation. National Register Programs are funded at \$15.7 million and will conduct approximately 1,300 new National Register actions and other activities such as digitizing National Register records. Funding for the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, proposed at \$1.7 million, will provide technical information, research, best-practices, and technology training to preservation professionals nationwide.

### **Historic Preservation Fund**

The Historic Preservation Fund appropriation supports Historic Preservation Offices in States, territories, and tribal lands for the preservation of historically and culturally significant sites and to carry out other responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act. The FY 2020 budget requests \$32.7 million.

### **Construction**

The budget proposes \$246.3 million for Construction. Line Item Construction is funded at \$160.7 million, which includes \$4.0 million for demolition and disposal projects, \$4.0 million to mitigate dangers in and around abandoned mineral lands sites, and \$152.7 million for line item projects that help tackle the NPS's \$11.9 billion deferred maintenance backlog and address important safety, visitor experience, and resource preservation issues at parks. Some project examples include rehabilitating the breakwater at Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie National Historical Park, and rebuilding the Nauset Light Beach Bathhouse at Cape Cod National Seashore.

The request funds Construction Program Management and Operations at \$41.9 million. Construction Planning is funded at \$17.9 million to ensure future projects are ready for execution and reduce uncertainties often uncovered during initial planning of construction work that can necessitate changes in materials, time, compliance, or other factors that could increase the cost of a project.

Funding for Special Programs is proposed at \$15.7 million. These programs work with parks to decrease the potential of and increase preparedness for dam accidents, upgrade the condition of employee housing, and provide for emergency projects.

The budget proposes to fund Management Planning activities of the Park Service at \$10.2 million. The program will continue special resource studies and reconnaissance surveys currently underway or in the transmittal process.

### **Land Acquisition and State Assistance**

Within the Federal Land Acquisition appropriation, American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) Acquisition Grants and Recreational Access Grants are funded at \$5.0 million and \$1.0 million, respectively. ABPP grant funding will allow for 12-15 grants per year and will continue protection of significant historic battlefield lands associated with wars on American soil. Recreational Access grants will allow NPS to continue to work with landowners adjacent to NPS properties to purchase properties that would enhance recreational opportunities.

### **Mandatory Proposals**

Due to sustained increases in visitation, as well as increases in fee pricing implemented in June of 2018, revenues collected by NPS under the authority established in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) have increased 65% from FY 2014 to FY 2018. These revenues are used primarily at the park where they were collected, with a portion used at non-collecting parks, to implement projects and programs that enhance the visitor experience and

improve visitor facilities. The FY 2020 budget estimates \$312.5 million in FLREA revenues and plans to obligate \$192.8 million on deferred maintenance, capital improvement, and routine maintenance.

The budget also supports the Visitor Experience Improvements Fund (VEIF), as authorized through the Visitor Experience Improvement Authority (VEIA) under the National Park Service Centennial Act (P.L. 114-289). The budget estimates \$21.2 million in the revolving account to enhance the visitor experience through management, improvement, enhancement, operation, construction, and maintenance of commercial visitor services facilities.

### **Public Lands Infrastructure Fund**

The Departments of the Interior and Agriculture manage an infrastructure asset portfolio with over \$18 billion in deferred maintenance, which includes structures, trails, roads, utility systems, and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools. To address these needs, the budget includes \$6.5 billion over 5 years for a Public Lands Infrastructure Fund. The Fund will support infrastructure improvements through an allocation of 70 percent for national parks, 10 percent for national forests, 10 percent for wildlife refuges, five percent for BIE schools, and five percent for lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The Fund will be supported by the deposit of 50 percent of all Federal energy development revenue that would otherwise be credited or deposited as miscellaneous receipts to the Treasury over the 2020–2024 period, subject to an annual limit of \$1.3 billion. Interior and Agriculture would prioritize projects, monitor implementation, and measure results. This investment will significantly improve many of America's most visible, visited, and treasured places.

Thank you for your continued support of the NPS and consideration of our FY 2020 Budget Request.