

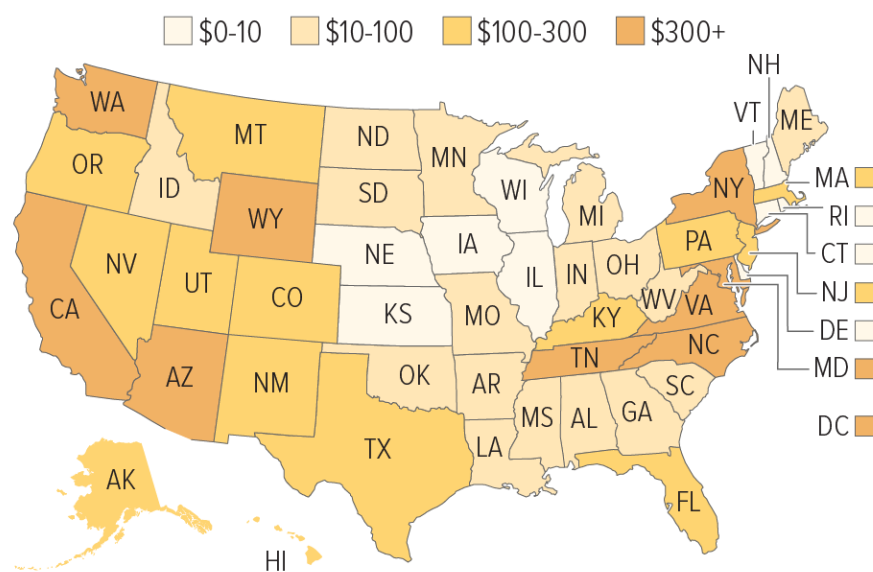
## National Park Maintenance and Repair

The National Park Service oversees 417 sites covering more than 84 million acres, including national parks, historic areas, battlefields, recreation areas, seashores, and several other categories; over 300 million people visit these places each year. The Park Service reports a backlog of almost \$12 billion in maintenance and repair needs at the parks and other sites it operates. (See Figure 14.) The backlog has grown in recent years due to inadequate funding.

FIGURE 14

### National Park Service Has \$12 Billion Backlog in Maintenance, Repair Needs

Backlog by state, in millions of dollars



National Park Service, Deferred Maintenance by State and Park, as of September 2015

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About half of this deferred maintenance backlog involves paved roads, bridges, and tunnels; the rest includes buildings, drinking water and wastewater treatment systems, dams, and historic structures.<sup>61</sup>

One reason for these large needs is that many park facilities and structures were put in place during a major Eisenhower Administration initiative to rehabilitate and improve national park infrastructure over a ten-year period starting in 1956. Others date back to the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930s. As a result, many facilities are aging and in need of repair, rehabilitation, or replacement.

<sup>61</sup> For more information, including totals for individual parks, see: National Park Service (NPS), “NPS Deferred Maintenance Reports,” <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/plandesignconstruct/defermain.htm>.

Funding for roads, bridges, and tunnels comes largely from the Highway Trust Fund, while other maintenance and repairs are funded through annual appropriations.<sup>62</sup> Larger projects are supported through the Park Service’s construction account, which received just \$209 million in 2017 — 62 percent less than in 2001 and 19 percent less than 2010, after adjusting for inflation.

Smaller projects and ongoing maintenance are funded through the Operation of the National Park System account, which also covers personnel and other operating costs. Over the past decade, appropriations for the operation account have not kept pace with the growing number of people visiting Park Service facilities. The problem has worsened in recent years: between 2010 and 2016, funding fell by 5 percent in inflation-adjusted terms, while the number of visitors grew by 18 percent.<sup>63</sup>

The Park Service estimates that maintenance needs are roughly double the annual funding provided to address them; as a result, the maintenance backlog continues to grow.<sup>64</sup> (It grew by \$410 million just between 2014 and 2015, after adjusting for inflation.) Without sufficient funding to substantially reduce that backlog, facilities will likely continue to deteriorate, impairing services to visitors and protection of historical and cultural assets — and increasing future costs for repair and replacement.

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<sup>62</sup> Only annual appropriations are subject to the 2011 Budget Control Act caps. Funding provided by the Highway Trust Fund is outside the caps.

<sup>63</sup> Data for number of visitors from NPS, “Annual Summary Report,” <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/Reports/National>.

<sup>64</sup> See “NPS Deferred Maintenance Reports.”