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David McLain/ Aurora Photos

Acadia National Park's \$68 million deferred maintenance list includes needed repairs to historic carriage roads.

Acadia National Park

Maine

Overview

More than 3 million people last year crossed a small causeway linking Maine's central coast to Mount Desert Island, home to Acadia National Park. They were drawn to its rocky shorelines, spruce-fir forests, and towering granite peaks, including the tallest point on the Atlantic coast. A network of hiking trails and roads cuts through most of the park, giving visitors a chance to spot bald eagles, peregrine falcons, white-tailed deer, moose, and minks. Patches of the sprawling park are also found on the adjacent Schoodic Peninsula and tiny Isle au Haut to the south. While the large crowds, particularly in the summer, are a boon to Bar Harbor and other villages on the park's edges, Acadia struggles to keep up with crucial repair needs, which total \$68.6 million.

Maintenance challenges

Acadia's maintenance backlog includes critical infrastructure, buildings, and important sites. Acadia's historic carriage roads are popular with hikers, bikers, and horseback riders, and serve as the primary connection to the park's interior. About 20 years ago, with assistance from Friends of Acadia, a nonprofit organization, the park restored all but the most popular carriage road: Eagle Lake Loop. The loop has been in such high demand that park officials have resorted to frequent stopgap fixes, and nearly half of it requires extensive maintenance, at a cost of over \$2 million. The deferred maintenance for all carriage roads in the park is \$8 million.

Built in the mid-1950s and early 1960s, Acadia's headquarters is also in dire need of repairs and renovations. One-inch-wide cracks between cinderblocks extend from the roof of the maintenance building to its foundation, sending frigid air inside during the winter. Its roof leaks and is caving in, and wooden boards have fallen from the ceiling. And the park's administrative office requires a new heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) system. The combined fixes and upgrades will cost about \$15 million.

Sieur de Monts, a popular landmark built over a spring, is located within the Cadillac Mountain watershed, an important wetland habitat. The site formerly housed restrooms connected to septic tanks, but testing of nearby water determined that the tanks were leaching and contaminating the watershed. The National Park Service (NPS) redirected the wastewater, but \$100,000 is needed to restore the watershed.

And Hulls Cove Visitor Center, at the northern entrance to Mount Desert Island, requires accessibility improvements for visitors using wheelchairs and a new HVAC system, at a cost of \$1 million.



The park is responsible for creating Bar Harbor as it is today. The only thing that sets Bar Harbor apart is Acadia."

Eben Salvatore, a director for Ocean Properties, which owns hotels in Bar Harbor, in a 2016 interview with the *Bangor Daily News*¹

Recommendations

To address the deferred maintenance needs at Acadia and other NPS sites in Maine and across the country, Congress should:

- Ensure that infrastructure initiatives include provisions to address park maintenance.
- Provide dedicated annual federal funding for national park repairs.
- Enact innovative policy reforms to ensure that deferred maintenance does not escalate.
- Provide more highway funding for NPS maintenance needs.
- Create more opportunities for public-private collaboration and donations to help restore park infrastructure.

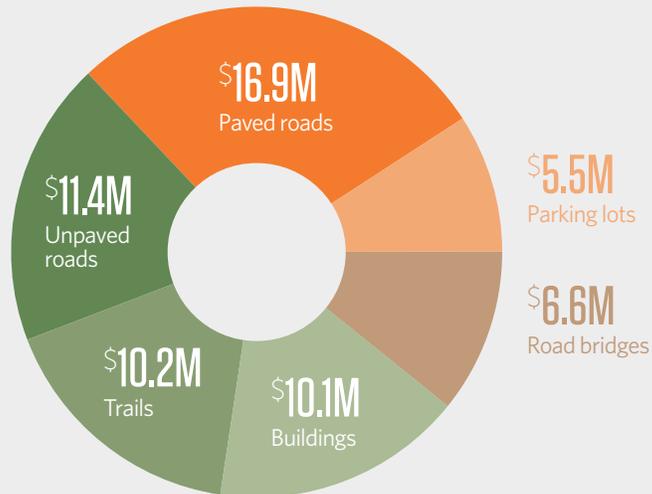
Table 1
Acadia National Park Facts
 2016

Visitor spending	\$274.2 million
Jobs created by visitor spending	4,200
Economic output	\$332.8 million
Labor income	\$111.1 million
Visits	3,303,393
Deferred maintenance (fiscal year 2015)	\$68.6 million

Sources: National Park Service, "Annual Visitation Report by Years: 2006 to 2016," accessed July 13, 2017, [https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/National%20Reports/Annual%20Visitation%20By%20Park%20\(1979%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year\)](https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/National%20Reports/Annual%20Visitation%20By%20Park%20(1979%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year)); National Park Service, "Visitor Spending Effects," accessed July 13, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm>; National Park Service, "NPS Deferred Maintenance Reports," accessed Aug. 19, 2016, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/plandesignconstruct/defermain.htm>

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Figure 1
Acadia National Park Needs Millions of Dollars in Infrastructure Repairs
 Key deferred maintenance



Note: This chart depicts the largest maintenance categories.

Source: Pew analysis of National Park Service data

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The Pew Charitable Trusts works alongside the National Parks Conservation Association, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and other national and local groups to ensure that our national park resources are maintained and protected for future generations to enjoy.

Endnote

- 1 Aislinn Sarnacki, Bill Trotter, and John Holyoke, "How Growing Tourism Could Change Acadia Over the Next 100 Years," *Bangor Daily News*, July 14, 2016, <http://acadia100.bangordailynews.com/2016/07/14/acadia-100/how-growing-tourism-could-change-acadia-over-the-next-100-years/?ref=inline>.

This case study was updated on July 31, 2017, to reflect newly released 2016 data and to correct references to calendar and fiscal year.

For further information, please visit:

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