



A majority of the recreation area's \$1.1 million in deferred maintenance is to repair the Coldwater Spring house and reservoir.

# Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

Minnesota

## Overview

The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area spans 72 miles of the iconic river where it separates St. Paul and Minneapolis. It protects land along both sides of the river, which flows across prairie before plunging over St. Anthony Falls, its only waterfall, and through its narrowest gorge just north of the Twin Cities. Among the many historical sites along its banks is Fort Snelling, where the military worked to break Japanese codes during World War II.

The national park, established by Congress in 1988, is managed by the National Park Service (NPS) in partnership with local communities, parks, and other organizations tied to the Mississippi River. Despite its urban setting, this section of the river and the 54,000 acres of protected land along it offer fishing, boating, and canoeing in the summer, and ice fishing and cross-country skiing in the winter. But more needs to be done to restore the park, which has \$1.1 million in deferred maintenance.

## Maintenance challenges

Because this is a partnership park, it operates and maintains only one property: Coldwater Spring, a tract of prairie and wetlands that offers hiking, biking, and bird-watching. Originally used by American Indians as a gathering spot, the spring became a drinking water source for soldiers stationed at Fort Snelling in the 1880s. The Army built water works to protect the spring, including a spring house that kept debris from muddying the entrance. The War Department decommissioned the fort in 1946 and the site is now managed by the Minnesota Historical Society in partnership with the NPS. In 2010, the park began restoring the area, including repairing the spring house, removing some buildings constructed during the 1950s and '60s as part of a research center, and reseeding 12 acres of prairie and an acre of wetlands abutting a reservoir. The NPS needs \$682,000 to complete the restoration work.

The park also needs \$375,000 to upgrade nine interpretive media collections at the visitor center.



Locals and visitors alike spend more than \$5 million in communities along the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. That's why it's important to ensure collaboration and support from Congress, state agencies, and local businesses when funding is needed for infrastructure maintenance."

**Terry Mattson**, president and CEO, Visit Saint Paul and the RiverCentre Authority

## Recommendations

To address the infrastructure needs at Mississippi National River and Recreation Area and other NPS sites in Minnesota 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.

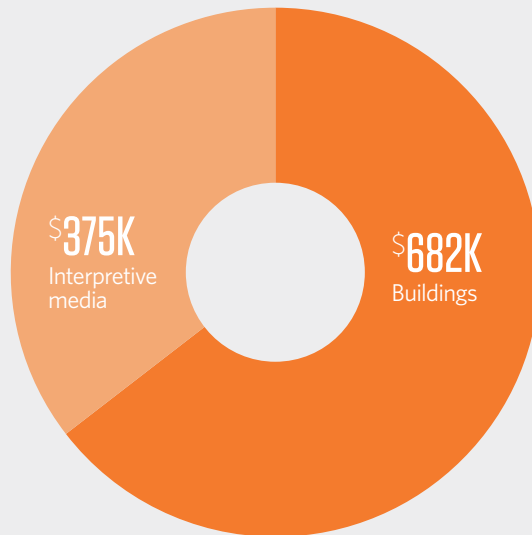
Table 1  
 Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Facts  
 2016

<b>Visitor spending</b>	\$11.2 million
<b>Jobs created by visitor spending</b>	175
<b>Economic output</b>	\$15.6 million
<b>Labor income</b>	\$5.5 million
<b>Visits</b>	256,944
<b>Deferred maintenance (fiscal year 2015)</b>	\$1.1 million

Sources: National Park Service, "National Park Service Visitor Use Statistics," accessed June 14, 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 June 14, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm>; National Park Service, "NPS Deferred Maintenance Reports," accessed June 23, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/plandesignconstruct/defermain.htm>

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Figure 1  
 Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Needs \$1.1 Million for 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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