

Masonry repairs to the Missouri State Memorial are part of the park's \$18.6 million maintenance backlog.

Vicksburg National Military Park

Mississippi

Overview

During the Civil War, possession of Vicksburg, Mississippi—known as the Gibraltar of the Confederacy—meant controlling the Mississippi River. On July 4, 1863, the Union Army captured the city perched on bluffs after an almost seven-week siege. Coupled with the Confederate States Army's defeat at Gettysburg the day before, Vicksburg marked a major turning point in the war.

Visitors to Vicksburg National Military Park can learn about the critical Union campaign to capture the city, as well as Reconstruction efforts after the war. Established in 1899, the park houses more than a thousand historic monuments and markers and is the final resting place for more than 17,000 Union troops.

Today, an \$18.6 million maintenance backlog threatens the integrity of the battlefield, the remaining historic structures, and many of the monuments and memorials.

Maintenance challenges

The park's 1,806 acres remain a challenge for National Park Service (NPS) staff. The landscapes need \$9.4 million in maintenance, over half of the park's backlog. The tour road and Vicksburg National Cemetery also require more than \$5 million in repairs.

Although Vicksburg has a dedicated staff and a supportive local community, historic assets require care beyond the existing deferred maintenance budget. To improve the visitor experience, close to \$3 million is required to update the visitor center, rehabilitate historic buildings, and restore monuments. For example, Pemberton's Headquarters, where Confederate Lt. Gen. John Pemberton planned the defense of the city, is closed to the public. The building requires more than \$500,000 to stabilize interior flooring and restore the porch, among other repairs. In January 2017, entrance fees were raised to help pay for these improvements, generating an estimated \$150,000 annually.¹

Vicksburg is home to more than 1,300 aging monuments, memorials, and markers that account for \$1.4 million in delayed repairs. All of these structures require basic maintenance, but some of the larger monuments need more intensive restoration work. The park expects to finish work on the Missouri State Memorial in time for its centennial celebration in 2017, but the Wisconsin Memorial needs about \$500,000 in repairs.

Like many other national parks, Vicksburg lacks adequate funding to repave roads, parking lots, and road bridges. Weather exposure and high traffic have caused significant wear and tear. Most nonlocal visitors tour the park by car or bus, stopping at key sections of the battlefield or monuments along the way. Deferred maintenance on these roads detracts from the visitor experience.

“ The Vicksburg National Military Park has always been a vital part of tourism in Vicksburg. With hundreds of thousands of visitors to the park each year, the positive impact to our community is tremendous. People from all over the world not only get an opportunity to see our historical military park, but they get a chance to experience the culture and excitement that is Vicksburg.”

George Flaggs Jr., Vicksburg mayor

Recommendations

To address the deferred maintenance needs at Vicksburg and other NPS sites in Mississippi 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
Vicksburg National Military Park Facts
 2016

Visitor spending	\$29.8 million
Jobs created by visitor spending	488
Economic output	\$39.1 million
Labor income	\$13.7 million
Visits	508,915
Deferred maintenance (fiscal year 2015)	\$18.6 million

Note: This case study was updated on Dec. 13, 2017, to correct the number of visitors.

Sources: National Park Service, "Annual Visitation Report by Years: 2006 to 2016," 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 Aug. 19, 2016, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/plandesignconstruct/defermain.htm>

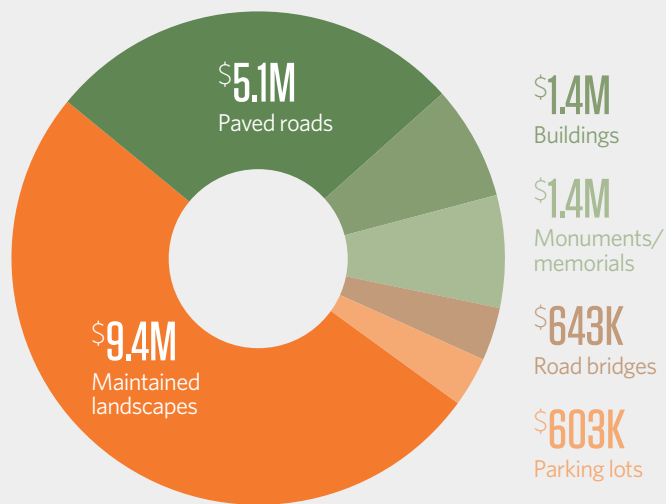
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Figure 1
Vicksburg National Military Park Needs Millions for Infrastructure Repairs
 Key deferred maintenance

Note: This chart depicts the largest maintenance categories by dollar value.

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 Sharon Cummings, "National Military Park Fee to Increase," MyArkLaMiss.com, Dec. 13, 2016, <http://www.myarklamiss.com/news/local-news/national-military-park-fee-to-increase/618815686>.

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For further information, please visit:

pewtrusts.org/nationalparks

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