



Denali National Park and Preserve, home to the only sled dog team in the National Park System, needs more than \$53 million in repairs.

Denali National Park and Preserve

Alaska

Overview

Denali National Park and Preserve is one of America's crown jewels, an extraordinary landscape by any measure. This vast wilderness, spanning 6 million acres in south-central Alaska, is one of the best places to see the "big five" in the American wild: moose, bears, Dall sheep, caribou, and wolves. The park also contains extraordinary ecological diversity. From low-elevation forests to high alpine tundra and the icy peaks of Denali, North America's highest mountain, the park is a living laboratory for scientists and researchers. For climbers, summiting these peaks is a coveted goal. Hundreds of thousands of other visitors come each year to camp, hike, or simply drive through the extraordinary setting.

This year, Denali celebrated its 100th anniversary. Sustaining the park for the coming decades, however, will be difficult without an infusion of funds to address a backlog of infrastructure repairs that totals \$53 million.

Maintenance challenges

Among the park's most pressing needs is maintenance on its roads and other transportation infrastructure, in particular the Denali Park Road. This corridor begins at the park's entrance and runs west for 92 miles over high mountain passes and through broad river valleys until it reaches Kantishna, an unincorporated community. The road is the only way to access the heart of the park, enabling shuttle buses to bring guests to two visitor centers and various campgrounds that dot the landscape along the way. The harsh freeze-and-thaw cycles of the Alaskan climate have caused the paved and nonpaved sections to deteriorate. As a result, the road requires almost \$26 million in repairs, and bridges also need maintenance.

The park and preserve's buildings, including five that are on the National Register of Historic Places, also need repairs. One, the Denali park kennel, houses the only sled dogs in the National Park System. The dogs have been a part of the park since its inception, are significant in Native Alaskan culture, and are popular with tourists. Rangers also use them when they patrol the backcountry for poachers. The kennels need \$33,000 in repairs.

As with other parks, many important repair needs are not visible to the average visitor. For example, the park headquarters' wastewater system needs a \$1.4 million overhaul, while \$1.7 million is needed to provide potable water. Another \$385,000 is needed for repairs related to electrical capacity at key locations along the Denali Park Road, including the Teklanika and Toklat River rest stops.



The Denali Borough communities benefit from a thriving Denali National Park in many ways. We support funding the maintenance backlog to keep Denali a great place to enjoy."

Clay Walker, Denali Borough mayor

Recommendations

To address the deferred maintenance needs at Denali and other National Park Service (NPS) sites in Alaska 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.

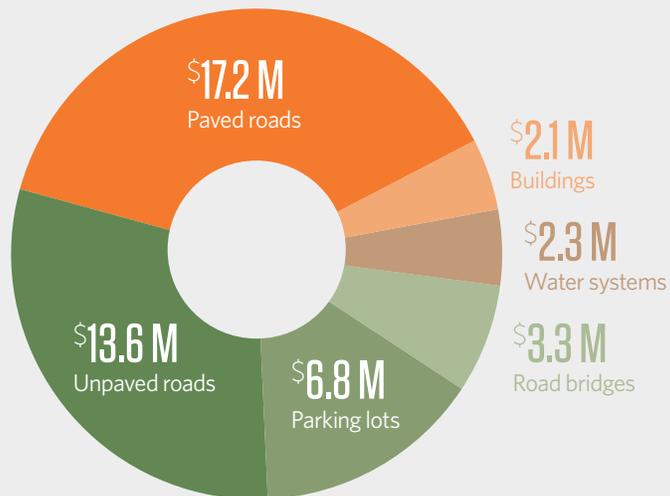
Table 1
Denali National Park and Preserve Facts
 2016

Visitor spending	\$604.9 million
Jobs created by visitor spending	7,700
Economic output	\$864.4 million
Labor income	\$286.4 million
Visits	587,412
Deferred maintenance (fiscal year 2015)	\$53.1 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
Denali National Park and Preserve Needs Millions of Dollars 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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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.

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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