



\$191,000 is needed to repair one of the park's two surviving Civilian Conservation Corps buildings, which date to the Great Depression.

Shenandoah National Park

Virginia

Overview

Over a million people enter Shenandoah National Park's gates each year, most taking the Skyline Drive to vantage points along 105 miles of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The 200,000-acre park tracks the spine of the mountains in the northwestern corner of Virginia. From pullouts or granite peaks accessed by more than a dozen hiking trails, visitors have spectacular views of the state's Piedmont region and Shenandoah Valley—particularly during peak fall foliage.

Shenandoah is an early example of environmental planning and design in the National Park System. In the early 1900s, people living as far away as Washington built summer retreats here. When the park was established in 1935, more than 10,000 boys and young men in the Civilian Conservation Corps tore down most of these

structures and nearly all homes built by early European settlers to create a more natural setting. They also carved trails—which now span over 500 miles—and built other park infrastructure. The park encompasses parts of eight counties and its restoration has allowed Congress to designate roughly 40 percent of it as wilderness areas.

That wilderness draws scientists conducting ecological research ranging from bear behavior to the effects of acid rain, in addition to hikers. Unfortunately, Shenandoah faces a maintenance backlog of over \$90 million, more than half of which is for road repairs.

Maintenance challenges

Most of the infrastructure repairs—about \$55 million—are associated with roads and parking lots. Skyline Drive needs more than \$38 million in repairs, including resurfacing pavement, restoring historic stone walls and culverts, and installing drainage systems.

Shenandoah also needs \$6.2 million to maintain more than 360 structures, ranging from comfort stations and shelters to historic cabins and President Herbert Hoover’s retreat. Maintenance is required not only for the heavily used Big Meadows Lodge and Skyland Area’s Pollock Dining Room, but also for such key facilities as the Pinnacles research station and the Skyland water treatment plant building. Most of the park’s water and sewer systems—including pipes, access points, and treatment plants—are 50 to 80 years old and need updating to adequately serve visitors.

To help Shenandoah National Park address its maintenance needs, several nonprofits and volunteer groups, such as the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club and the Shenandoah National Park Trust, are pitching in. The groups are helping to remove invasive species, make over 200 miles of trails more accessible, and repair historic structures. While the park is fortunate to have these supportive partnerships, adequate congressional funding is necessary to ensure that visitors can fully and safely experience the park’s history and natural beauty.



Shenandoah National Park is a tremendous asset for Warren County, bringing in about 500,000 visitors a year through the northern entrance. ... Funding for continued improvements and much-needed maintenance at Shenandoah National Park is necessary to stay competitive.”

Douglas P. Stanley, Warren County administrator and chairman of Celebrate Shenandoah

Recommendations

To address the deferred maintenance needs at Shenandoah and other National Park Service sites in Virginia 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
 Shenandoah National Park Facts
 2016

Visitor spending	\$96.2 million
Jobs created by visitor spending	1,278
Economic output	\$126.2 million
Labor income	\$50 million
Visits	1,437,341
Deferred maintenance (fiscal year 2015)	\$90.2 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>

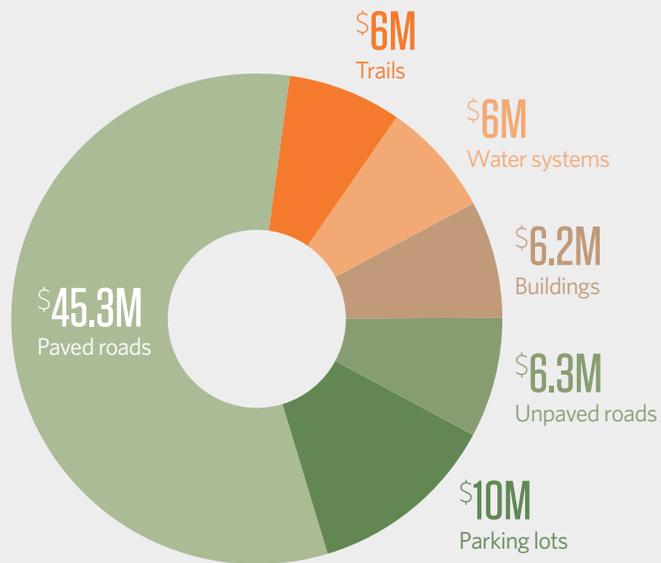
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Figure 1
 Shenandoah National Park Needs Millions for Infrastructure Repairs
 Key deferred maintenance

Note: This chart depicts the largest maintenance categories.

Source: Pew analysis of National Park Service data

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