



**Written Testimony of The Pew Charitable Trusts
Submitted to the House Natural Resources Committee
Regarding Field Hearing in Hot Springs, Arkansas
"Historic Leasing in the National Park System: Assessing Challenges and Building on Successes"
September 17, 2018**

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, Representative Westerman, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony today on historic leasing and deferred maintenance within our national parks sites.

The Pew Charitable Trusts' Restore America's Parks campaign seeks to conserve the natural and cultural assets of the National Park System by providing common sense, long-term solutions to the \$11.6 billion deferred maintenance challenge facing the National Park Service (NPS).

National parks often have the same infrastructure as a city or town, and as a result face the same deterioration and maintenance needs. In total, the agency is responsible for protecting and managing over 75,000 assets, while also ensuring that visitors can safely access and enjoy these resources. NPS assets are tangible properties that serve a specific park function and can include: roads and bridges, trails, historic buildings, employee housing, wastewater and electrical systems, military fortifications, monuments and memorials, and seawalls. Maintenance is required at regular intervals to ensure acceptable park facility conditions; when this maintenance is delayed for more than a year, it's considered to be "deferred."

Over 47 percent of assets on NPS' deferred maintenance list are considered historic. As such, Pew supports and encourages the increased use of historic leasing as an important tool to address deferred maintenance challenges facing the NPS. Leasing of historic properties—there are an estimated 9,000 within the National Park System—is a type of public-private partnership that helps restore these properties, save NPS money, and provide revenue-producing businesses in communities.

Examples of historic leasing and public-private partnerships being leveraged to address deferred maintenance include:

Hot Springs National Park. In Hot Springs, Arkansas, natural springs have supplied water for therapeutic baths since the 1800s. The eight historic bathhouses contained within Bathhouse Row were constructed between 1892 and 1923; by the 1960s, however, their popularity declined and bathhouses began to close. In 2004, the NPS began significant efforts to renovate these historic sites so they could be enjoyed by the public once again. Of the original eight bathhouses, the agency helped restore five that are currently used by NPS or other tenants. Historic leasing, including the historic tax credit, were essential to financing the renovations, and current uses include spas, museums, and a brewery and distillery that crafts beer from the hot springs.

Martin Luther King National Historic Park. NPS funds the maintenance for federally-owned houses within the park unit with revenue generated through leasing 29 of the historic buildings as private residences. These structures include apartments, duplexes and single-family homes and the leasing program has proven to be very popular.

Valley Forge National Historical Park. This park site houses a Montessori school that reached an agreement with the park to pay for needed repairs to preserve the 3.5-acre Ivy Hollow Farm site in exchange for a long-term lease that would allow the school to meet there. The mutually beneficial agreement resulted in the restoration of the 19th century farm and a vacant barn with years of deferred maintenance; today, the buildings contain a library and parent meeting room, and a six-classroom school that is provides an idyllic setting for its students.

Pew is pleased that the Committee recognizes historic leasing and its role in addressing the deferred maintenance backlog. We encourage Congress and the National Park Service to expand opportunities for the agency and private entities to use this important tool.

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