



More than \$6 million is needed to repair roads at Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve, including the 7-mile-long Loop Road.

Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve

Idaho

Overview

Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve protects the deepest-known split in the Earth—Idaho's Great Rift—where the continental crust is thinning and breaking apart and allowing lava to spill onto the surface. The National Park Service (NPS) site contains over 1,000 square miles of flood basalts and other volcanic features such as lava tubes, spatter cones, and tree molds—the impressions left over in rock after hot lava incinerates forests. Craters of the Moon is one of the least-developed NPS sites in the continental United States. Unfortunately, the roads that visitors take to access wilderness areas—or simply view the unique topography—are in disrepair.

Maintenance challenges

Craters of the Moon has almost \$8 million in backlogged repairs, and most of that—more than \$6 million—is for road maintenance. Scenic Loop Road, the main road that transects the park, needs more than \$1 million for resurfacing. Another \$1.7 million is needed for repairs to Tree Molds Road, which leads visitors to an area of the park where ancient lava incinerated a forest, leaving behind many casts that outline the shape of trees where they once stood. And the service road leading to the park's sole campground has more than \$1.5 million in needed repairs.

On a more positive note, in July 2016, the park began a major revitalization of its campground, which dates back to Mission 66, a \$1 billion infrastructure investment undertaken between 1956 and 1966, the NPS' 50th anniversary. The campground had been maintained and was in good condition, but it needed to be updated for 21st-century safety and accessibility needs. Roads and campsites are being widened to accommodate today's larger vehicles, access is being improved for visitors with disabilities, and more safeguards are being put in place to protect natural features so that future visitors can enjoy the park.

More than half of nontransportation deferred maintenance is for nearly 30 buildings at the park, 10 of which are historic. This includes making the buildings more energy-efficient by winterizing and replacing windows, caulking gaps, replacing roofs, and installing LED lighting. Masonry repairs are on the list, too. Nearly \$150,000 is also needed to upgrade the park's water system.



Craters of the Moon is an important financial driver for the Pocatello-Chubbuck community, generating \$9.5 million in economic output for the region in 2015, according to the National Park Service. That's why it's so important that we invest in and take care of the park's infrastructure."

Birgitta Bright, tourism administrator, Visit Pocatello

Recommendations

To address the deferred maintenance needs at Craters of the Moon and other NPS sites in Idaho 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

Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve Facts Calendar year 2016

Visitor spending	\$8.9 million
Jobs created by visitor spending	139
Economic output	\$10.2 million
Labor income	\$3.3 million
Visits	255,436
Deferred maintenance (fiscal year 2015)	\$7.8 million

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>

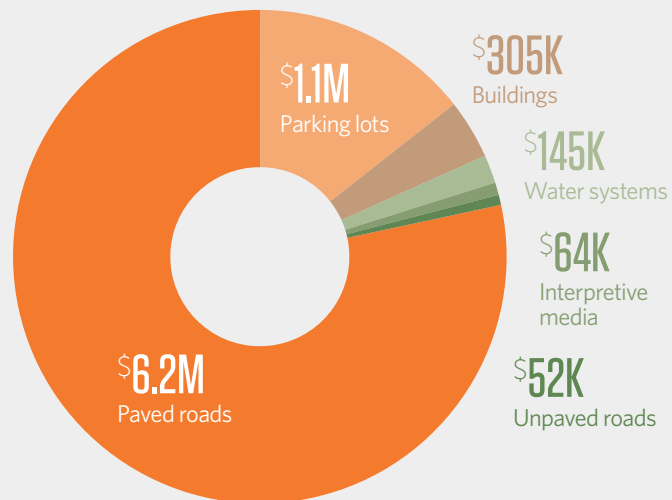
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Figure 1
Craters of the Moon
National Monument
and Preserve
Needs Millions
for Infrastructure
Repairs
Key deferred
maintenance

Note: This chart depicts the largest maintenance categories.

Source: Pew analysis of National Park Service data

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