



# FIELDREPORT

Southeast Region | Summer 2018



## PARKS IN FOCUS Teaching the Next Generation of Park Enthusiasts

**E**stablished in 2015, as the 409th unit of the National Park System, Manhattan Project National Historical Park consists of three units—Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Los Alamos, New Mexico; and Hanford, Washington—all telling unique and compelling parts of the story of the secret World War II project that thrust the world into the ‘Atomic Age’. During the war, East Tennessee rural farmland was turned into the bustling secret city of Oak Ridge, virtually created overnight and home to 75,000 women and men.

Two years ago, the National Park Service entered into a partnership with the Udall Foundation and Girls Inc. of Oak Ridge for a program to connect youth to the relevant history of the Manhattan Project. The *Parks in Focus* initiative connects local underrepresented youth to public lands through the lens of a digital camera to foster a continuing love of history and nature. This program also incorporates elements of creative expression, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) concepts, as well as environmental education components.

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## Tell Congress #FixOurParks

**T**o get a snapshot of the enormous \$11.6 billion backlog of deferred maintenance in the National Park System, one needs look no further than our nation’s most visited National Park—Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee and North Carolina. At this one park, the deferred maintenance backlog is calculated to be \$215 million—over 10 times the total annual budget for this park. The maintenance backlog is about *things*, but it’s also about *people*. Between 2011 and 2017, the National Park Service (NPS) saw an 11 percent decrease overall in staff while accommodating a 19 percent increase in visitation. At the Smokies, the chronic underfunding of the NPS Operations budget has resulted, over the last decade, in a 23 percent reduction in staffing. Rather than propose improved investments in our parks, the Administration has in its last two budgets proposed further dramatic cuts in funding for the national parks. Fortunately, Congress has rejected the administration’s requests and provided much-needed increases in NPS funding over the past couple of years; however, much more needs to be done. The scale of the backlog of maintenance is so immense that specific action to remedy this dire problem is required and Congress now has legislation



before it aimed at chipping away at this history of neglect with dedicated funding.

Three bills have now been introduced to address this pressing issue over the coming years. NPCA supports two of these, the National Parks Legacy Act and a newly-introduced compromise bill, the Restore Our Parks Act (S.3172). Both bills would supply a reliable, dedicated funding stream and would not be subject to the uncertainties of the energy development sector. We applaud the bipartisan collaboration that led to these two bills.

At Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the maintenance crisis comes in the form of crumbling roads, aging wastewater treatment

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Summer 2018

## Southeast Regional Office

Advocating for National Parks in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina

706 Walnut Street • Suite 200  
Knoxville, TN 37902  
www.npca.org/southeast  
865.329.2424 • 800.628.7275

### Don Barger

SENIOR REGIONAL DIRECTOR  
dbarger@npca.org  
865.329.2424, ext 23

### Emily Jones

CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR  
ejones@npca.org  
865.329.2424, ext 26

### Chris Watson

SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER  
cwatson@npca.org  
865.329.2424, ext 24

### Tracy Kramer

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT  
MANAGER  
tkramer@npca.org  
865.329.2424, ext 21

## Asheville Field Office

One Rankin Ave. • 2nd Floor  
Asheville, NC 28801

### Jeff Hunter

PROGRAM MANAGER  
jhunter@npca.org  
828.545.1401



[npca.org](http://npca.org)

Since 1919, the nonpartisan National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. NPCA, its 1.3 million members and supporters, and many partners work together to protect the park system and preserve our nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage for our children and grandchildren.

## REFLECTIONS FROM THE SENIOR DIRECTOR

### The Promise of Parks

It was one of those moments of understanding. Years ago, at the North Carolina Arboretum in Asheville, I was listening to author and historian Wilma Dykeman speak about human connections I had felt but never articulated. "Sense of place", she said, "is not an abstract concept, but an awareness as deep and pervasive as breath." Her words gave voice to experiences that have moved and shaped me over my years as a national park visitor and advocate. These precious reserves of contemplation give us all the opportunity to connect. To connect with the land and with the biodiverse world that sustains us all. To connect with our heritage and



understand, perhaps, the importance of diversity in our thinking. To connect with one another by understanding our differences and embracing our commonalities. To connect with ourselves and that persistent voice that knows the truth.

Tell the truth you know. Tell others about your experiences

in places of contemplation. Do your best to explain the soul-renewing experience of wonder. It is now our responsibility to connect with those whose decisions will affect the future of our children's and grandchildren's opportunities for connection and understanding. Tell the truth you know.

### Ocmulgee Campaign Update



The Ocmulgee Mounds Boundary Revision Act (HR 538 & S 135 passed) the U.S. House of Representatives in the 115th Congress and is awaiting a final vote in the Senate. Prospects are looking good and NPCA continues to work diligently in support of Senator Isakson's efforts to ensure passage before the end of 2018.

**Above:** Family fun with Ocmulgee Indian Celebration Fancy Dancers. ©Tracy Kramer | NPCA

In the meantime, as we press on in the effort to expand the park, please come out and visit NPCA's booth at the 2018 Ocmulgee Indian Celebration, the largest Native American gathering in the Southeast with over 300 craftsmen, dancers, storytellers and living history demonstrators. This year's Celebration will be on Saturday and Sunday, September 15-16, at the Ocmulgee National Monument in Macon, Georgia. Stop by and say hello. We hope to see you there!

### TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

What do you like about this newsletter? What other topics or features would you like to see? Please contact us with your feedback at [npca.org/southeast](http://npca.org/southeast).

# Saving Cumberland Island

In our Fall 2016 Field Report, we told you about a spaceport proposed by local politicians in Camden County, Georgia, that will launch rockets over Cumberland Island National Seashore, one of our country's most unique and beloved barrier islands. NPCA has been working with the Southern Environmental Law Center and five other conservation partners to ask the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to take a hard look at potential environmental harm that rocket launches would pose to the island ecosystem, area waters, residents and vacationers. During the FAA's Environmental Impact Statement public comment period, which ended June 14, NPCA members submitted over 11,000 comments opposing the licensing of Spaceport Camden.

Aside from its wild, primeval beauty—lush with tangled live oaks and pristine, undeveloped beaches—what makes Cumberland Island so special? What's at risk?

Cumberland Island contains the largest maritime forest on the east coast of the United States and is home to ibis, egrets, wood storks, sea turtles, manatees, and gopher tortoises—all depending on the island and its surrounding marshes, beaches, and biologically unique aquatic systems for critical habitat. Over 335 species of birds



stop over the island as they proceed on their migration journey along the Atlantic Flyway. Additionally, Cumberland Island has 16,500 acres of marsh, mudflats and tidal creeks that are a critical part of the Georgia marsh system (which accounts for one-third of the marshland on the eastern seaboard) providing important nursery habitat for shrimp, oysters, and commercial and sport fish species.

Cumberland Island can only be reached by ferry, private boat or kayak; making it uniquely suited for visitors to experience

natural sounds, night skies, and wilderness solitude. Additionally, Cumberland is home to five historic and two archeological districts that are on the National Register of Historic Places, adding to the island's unique heritage tourism appeal. Visitor spending brings over \$2 million a year to the local economy, and closures required for launches could disrupt, if not derail, vacation plans, local commercial fishing, general access and peace and quiet in the county. Go to [npca.org/protectcumberland](http://npca.org/protectcumberland) to learn more about this issue and [nps.gov/CUIS](http://nps.gov/CUIS) for more info on this American treasure.

**Above:** Launch trajectory and closure areas as shown in the FAA's Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Graphic by Planet Nutshell, Inc.  
**Below:** Sea Camp Beach Trail, Cumberland Island National Seashore, Georgia ©Pat and Chuck Blackley | Alamy



# Tell Congress #FixOurParks

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facilities, outdated structures built during the Great Depression, and a closed campground. Not surprisingly, in a park where most visitors do not venture far from their automobiles, over three-fourths of the park's backlog of needed repairs—\$160+ million—are its 384 miles of paved roads, 6 tunnels and 146 bridges. About \$6 million of the maintenance needs in this park is for wastewater treatment facilities essential to providing water for visitors and protecting park streams. In April, Secretary Zinke and Sen. Lamar Alexander visited the closed Look Rock campground and picnic area on the Foothills Parkway. The area was closed in 2013 due to a failing wastewater treatment facility that the park was unable to replace.



While the Secretary pledged to reopen the area, it will take \$3 million in repairs and the restitution of funding for the necessary staff to provide essential maintenance, law enforcement and visitor services.

The backlog for trails in the park is pegged at \$16 million, almost a fourth of which is to rehabilitate the popular Laurel Falls Trail, which serves over 1 million visitors a year. Another \$1 million is needed for the rehabilitation of the numerous eighteenth and nineteenth century barns, churches, cabins and other structures in the park.

The clock is ticking and time does not stand still. It's time for the bipartisan congressional champions of both these bills to work together and quickly set our national parks on a course to recovery.

**Above:** Chimneys Picnic Area Comfort Station - rotting door to plumbing alley. ©NPS

## OUR PARKS BADLY NEED REPAIRS

Our national parks, from the Grand Canyon to Gettysburg, need billions of dollars in repairs. Congress and the president must work together to fix our parks and help the local and national economies they support.

### WHAT'S IN THE BACKLOG?

**DEATH VALLEY**

The park needs more than \$110 million in road repairs, including Artists Drive, Daylight Pass and Emigrant Canyon Road.  
**Backlog in 2016: \$140 million**

**ARLINGTON MEMORIAL BRIDGE**

The bridge crosses the Potomac River between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery, symbolically linking the North and the South, is in a severely degraded state and needs to be completely upgraded.  
**Backlog in 2016: \$250 million**

**GRAND CANYON**

The park's Trans-Canyon Pipeline, a 50-year-old pipe that carries water miles across the canyon to supply the South Rim and most of its visitors, suffers from multiple breaks and leaks every year and needs replacing.  
**Backlog in 2016: \$353 million**

**GETTYSBURG**

The battlefield has millions of dollars in overdue repairs for buildings, most of them historic, and monuments and memorials. These needs threaten the long-term protection of this hallowed ground and its landmarks that tell our American story.  
**Backlog in 2016: \$51 million**

### ECONOMIC BENEFIT VS. UNDERINVESTMENT BY CONGRESS

**\$18.4 BILLION**

PARK VISITOR SPENDING IN NEARBY COMMUNITIES IN 2016

**318,000**

JOBS SUPPORTED BY PARKS NATIONALLY

**33%**

DECLINE IN APPROPRIATED FEDERAL FUNDING FOR CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE FROM 2006-2015

NPS REPAIR AND REHABILITATION, CYCLIC MAINTENANCE, AND LINE-ITEM CONSTRUCTION ACCOUNTS. CONGRESS INCREASED THIS FUNDING IN FY16 AND FY17 BUT IT REMAINS INSUFFICIENT.

“ An investment in national park infrastructure is an investment in jobs and communities. ”

RICK HOWE  
Vice President, Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce, Wyoming

### HOW CONGRESS CAN HELP PARKS

**SUPPORT THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE LEGACY ACT**

(S. 751/ H.R. 2584)

This bipartisan bill would dedicate funding to pay down the maintenance backlog, protecting our heritage and the experiences of park visitors. Ask your members of Congress to co-sponsor this important bill.

[www.npca.org/fixourparks](http://www.npca.org/fixourparks)

## #FixOurParks

# Growing Future Park Leaders

**N**PCA has embarked on a new project in coordination with the Blue Ridge Parkway and Warren Wilson College (WWC) to sow the seeds for a new generation of park stewards. The *National Park Leaders* program launched this past fall with eighteen Warren Wilson students who participated in five modules that were co-facilitated by National Park Service rangers and NPCA staff. The curriculum was designed to inform the students of issues facing national parks and help them build skills to be leaders in addressing them. Modules included hands-on activities and site visits along the Blue Ridge Parkway to make the content more relevant. Students learned directly from park staff about the complex management challenges they face—from deferred maintenance to the budget cycle. They also learned about career opportunities in the National Park Service available to students from many different academic backgrounds.

Additional career development opportunity for students was found in the emphasis the modules placed on leadership development—many had components designed by former interns, including Stanback Fellow Noah White, and some were facilitated by NPCA intern Melissa Hooper. The peer-to-peer learning environment provided space for students to relate with program facilitators



Parkway. A rising sophomore and participant in the program, Jennie Mull, describes what she took away from the program: “I learned how to advocate and create pitches in support of the national parks on a national level. I realized the severity of deferred maintenance and I finished the program not only with the skills I need to be a protector of our parks and cultural sites, but also with much more confidence.”

The program brought NPCA and the Blue Ridge Parkway staff closer together and formed a strong relationship with Warren Wilson College. Warren Wilson students have already put their training to good use—participating in Parkway work days, writing op-eds, meeting with Senate staff about deferred maintenance solutions, tabling at events and interning for NPCA. We are excited to see what they will continue to do and will be working with a new WWC group this fall.

*Brian Wuertz, a NPCA Next Gen Volunteer and recent Warren Wilson College graduate, participated in the inaugural National Park Leaders program and went on to become an NPCA Fellow in our Asheville Field Office; setting camera traps for wildlife connectivity research, meeting with elected officials and doing community outreach.*

and gain confidence by seeing a peer succeed in this leadership role.

The program culminated with a *Civic Voice Lessons* workshop led by NPCA staff. This advocacy skills training was specific to the topics learned in the course and focused on addressing the \$500+ million deferred maintenance backlog at the Blue Ridge



**Top:** Brian Wuertz setting a wildlife camera trap near Great Smoky Mountains NP. ©NPCA **Left:** Students practicing their 'elevator' speeches during the Civic Voice Lessons Workshop. ©NPCA **Right:** WWC students learn from Parkway staff at Craggy Gardens Picnic Area, Parkway Mile Post 367. ©NPCA

# PARKS IN FOCUS

## Teaching the Next Generation of Park Enthusiasts

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A central character of this story was a photographer, James “Ed” Westcott, (now 96 years old), one of the first employees hired for the Manhattan Project, who was tasked with documenting the construction of the project with housing, factories and all the requirements of the fourth biggest

city in Tennessee. Ed had the unique talent of making his photos come to life by capturing the everyday activities of the workers and what it was truly like to live inside this war time ‘Secret City’. Using the same concepts Ed mastered—and sometimes standing in the same places where he took his original pictures—third and fourth grade girls dive deeper into the history of

their local community, as well as explore other national parks.

The program just finished its second year in Oak Ridge with a day trip in the nearby Big South Fork National River & Recreation Area. Going forward, park staff hope to expand the programs to all three Manhattan Project National Historical Park locations. For more info on this important park, visit [www.nps.gov/mapr](http://www.nps.gov/mapr).

*Robert Johnson, a NPCA Next Gen Volunteer, served as the Community Outreach Coordinator at the Manhattan Project NHP Oak Ridge site while he was a Student Conservation Association intern. Manhattan Project photographer Ed Westcott has been nominated for the Presidential Medal of Freedom, one of the highest civilian awards in the United States.*



Using the same concepts Ed [Westcott] mastered—and sometimes standing in the same places where he took his original pictures—third and fourth grade girls dive deeper into the history of their local community, as well as explore other national parks.

**Above Left:** ‘Chapel on the Hill’ photo taken by PIF participant Riley, age 9. **©NPS Above Right:** ‘Who Me?’ sign photo taken by PIF participant Saniya, age 8. **©NPS Below (Left to Right, Top to Bottom):** Parks in Focus participants with Ed Westcott. **©NPS •** Getting the perfect floral shot! **©NPS •** PIF participants and park rangers at Big Southfork NRRRA. **©NPS**



# Travel with NPCA this Fall!

## Seasons of Yosemite

**September 16-21, 2018 or  
October 7-12, 2018**

Feel the grandeur of John Muir's beloved Sierras as you explore mountain trails and granite valleys in Yosemite and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

**Right:** Yosemite waterfall reflection in water ©Pettys | Dreamstime



## Trustees for the Parks Puebloan Mystery Tour

**October 13-21, 2018**

Venture into the Four Corners region of Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico and Utah on this NPCA exclusive tour to discover the history of the Ancestral Puebloans.

**Right:** Cliff Palace at Mesa Verde National Park ©Sandy Groves, NPS



## Joshua Tree and Death Valley

**November 5-10, 2018**

Explore the startling, surreal and sublime landscapes of Joshua Tree and Death Valley as you head deep into the heart of the Mojave Desert.

**Right:** Landscape in Death Valley National Park, California ©Tobkatrina | Dreamstime



For more info on these trips and the full NPCA Travel Program schedule, visit [www.npca.org/travel](http://www.npca.org/travel) or contact Jared Dial, Travel Program Manager at [jdial@npca.org](mailto:jdial@npca.org) or 202.454.3305.



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**Gray Bats (*Myotis grisescens*)** are an endangered species native to the southeastern U.S., where they roost in limestone caves and forage for flying insects along rivers. A lactating female bat can eat up to her weight in insects in a night! They can be found in Mammoth Cave NP and Little River Canyon National Preserve.

©MerlinTuttle.org

## Connecting the Living Landscape Update

In our Fall 2017 Field Report, we profiled our wildlife connectivity work centered around Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This collaborative project has since resulted in the acquisition of an important 147-acre tract of private land on the boundary of the park. The story was front page news in the Asheville Citizen Times on November 16, 2018.

The parcel, known as the Stevens Creek Tract, owned by the Farmer Family, contains forest and meadows, and provides extraordinary views of the surrounding mountains. One of our collaborators, Kim DeLozier with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, had a long-standing relationship with brothers Bill and Bob Farmer. Because of this relationship, we were given permission to use the property



to access public lands managed by the NPS to deploy wildlife cameras.

In June of 2017, while at the property deploying cameras, Kim learned that the parcel was on the market, and a potential buyer was poised to make an offer. NPCA

was able to refer this property to a local land trust, the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC). The land is now permanently protected and will be managed for elk and other wildlife.

Sadly, Bill Farmer passed in March 2018, but not before he was able to see his beloved family farm protected for the critters that he so loved. We're grateful for the generosity and vision of the Farmer Family, and our partners at SAHC, without whom,

this conservation success story would not have been possible.

**Above:** Stevens Creek parcel map courtesy of Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy.