



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

JUN - 1 2022

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Chair, Natural Resources Subcommittee
on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Huffman:

Enclosed are responses prepared by the Department of the Interior to the questions for the record submitted following the July 21, 2021, oversight hearing entitled, "Examining the President's Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Proposal for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration." We apologize for the delay in our response.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to you on this matter.

Sincerely,

Christopher P. Salotti
Legislative Counsel
Office of Congressional and
Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Cliff Bentz
Ranking Member

**COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER, OCEANS, AND WILDLIFE**

Oversight Hearing on “*Examining the President’s Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Proposal for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.*”

Question from Rep. Boebert

Question: I know that there are current lawsuits over Reclamation projects. I ask that Reclamation provide the Committee a list of grants awarded by Reclamation to any entity that has sued them. Will you provide that to the Committee and my office?

Response: Please see attached for excel spreadsheet.

Questions from Rep. Costa

Question: Congress is currently discussing expanding the amount of funding dedicated to infrastructure, particularly water infrastructure in the Western United States. What large-scale storage and conveyance projects would Reclamation prioritize in California to increase the reliability of water supplies, should additional funding be made available by Congress?

Response: On Friday, July 23, 2021, Reclamation transmitted a letter to House and Senate Appropriations Committee leadership with Reclamation’s funding recommendations for Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act of 2016 (Public Law 114-322). That list proposed the allocation of previously appropriated funds for the construction of Sites Reservoir, the construction of Del Puerto Canyon Reservoir, the enlargement of Los Vaqueros Reservoir, and the enlargement of San Luis Reservoir, all in California. The other two categories of water supply projects referenced in the July 23, 2021, letter besides WIIN Section 4007 Water Storage projects were WIIN Section 4009(c) Title XVI Water Recycling projects, and WIIN Section 4009(a) Desalination projects.

In addition to sending funding recommendations for WIIN, Reclamation transmitted its spend plan for fiscal year 2022 for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (P.L. 117-58) that outlines at the programmatic level, how and where we will spend the funding provided for storage, recycling, and desalination. This includes \$210 Million in FY 2022 for Water Storage, Groundwater Storage, and Conveyance Projects. This funding could be used to cover identified needs for Federal share of WIIN-authorized projects. A copy of our spend plan can be found at www.usbr.gov/bil.

Question: Two years ago, California experienced one of the wettest winters in its history and there was a surplus of water. What would be the difference in available water supplies this year, had some of these projects that are under discussion actually been built? Specifically, if the conveyance capacity of the Delta-Mendota, Friant-Kern and California Aqueduct were restored to their original design capacity, and San Luis Reservoir were raised by 10 feet, and Los

Vaqueros Reservoir expanded as proposed, and Sites Reservoir were built, what allocation would Reclamation have been able to make to its customers this year?

Response: The Department and Reclamation are unable to answer this hypothetical question with specificity.

Question: There has been a great deal of discussion about the impacts of various regulatory changes and the tradeoffs between water supply and fisheries impacts. My understanding is that one of the changes contained in Reclamation's proposed action in the 2019 Reconsultation on the Long-Term Operations of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project resulted in additional cold-water supplies being available on a general basis for temperature management for salmon in the Sacramento river. Has Reclamation performed an analysis of the estimated performance differences between the previous biological opinions and the current biological opinions related to drought operations? If so, what benefits, if any, did the current biological opinions provide to water supply and environmental outcomes relative to the previous rules?

Response: Reclamation utilizes a variety of modeling tools to continue to evaluate the changing conditions in the system and has a goal to improve the operational capability to manage the infrastructure in the system for all project purposes including water quality, health and safety, and the environment. The 2019 and 2020 Record of Decision are the subject of ongoing litigation. Reclamation notified FWS/NMFS regarding an intent to reinstate consultation on the project operations to address changing conditions in a September 30, 2021, letter.

Questions from Rep. González-Colón

Question: Last year, Congress included within the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Public Law 116-260) my legislation to make Puerto Rico an eligible applicant location for the Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART Grants and Drought Resiliency Project Grants.

- a. What outreach efforts, if any, has the Bureau of Reclamation carried out to date to inform appropriate stakeholders in Puerto Rico about WaterSMART Grants and any other Reclamation funding opportunities that are now available to eligible applicants on the Island?
- b. If no outreach has been conducted yet, does the Bureau of Reclamation plan to engage with stakeholders in Puerto Rico to inform them about these funding opportunities?

Response: As a first step, Reclamation revised WaterSMART funding opportunities to ensure that the documents clearly state that entities located in Puerto Rico are eligible to apply for funding. In August, Reclamation posted the first three fiscal year 2022 WaterSMART funding opportunities¹ and posted four more fiscal year 2022 funding opportunities in January 2022.

¹ <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=335035>
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=335103>
<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=335081>

Where eligible, Reclamation has explicitly included language acknowledging eligibility for applicants in Puerto Rico.

On September 8, 2021, Reclamation held a webinar, with assistance from your office and staff to publicize the event so that as many potential applicants as possible were made aware of the opportunity to learn more about the program. Reclamation is continuing to explore additional outreach, including plans for additional webinars in 2022, and will coordinate with your office as we do so.



United States Department of the Interior

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Washington, DC 20240

JUN 23 2022

The Honorable Angus King, Jr.
Chairman, Subcommittee on National Parks
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Enclosed are responses prepared by the Department of the Interior to questions for the record received by the Department's witness, Ms. Shannon Estenoz, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, following her appearance before your Subcommittee at the February 9, 2022, hearing on Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act. We apologize for the delay in our response.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to you on these matters.

Sincerely,

Christopher P. Salotti
Legislative Counsel
Office of Congressional and
Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Steve Daines
Ranking Member

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

Questions from Committee Ranking Member Barrasso

Question 1: What is DOI's priority for maintaining existing infrastructure relative to acquisition of new assets?

Response: The Department of the Interior's goal is to take care of and maintain in good condition those assets, including infrastructure and land, that it currently manages. When existing infrastructure can no longer be cost-effectively maintained or adapted to support the agency's mission, the Department may look to construction or acquisition of alternate infrastructure that meets its mission needs. And the Department remains open to opportunities, when appropriate, to acquire additional land assets when those lands have resources values to advance the Department's mission, including streamlining management efficiencies and expanding access to federal lands and waters for the public, including to disadvantaged and underserved communities.

Question 2: Within the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) funds projects that improve access federal lands on transportation facilities in the national Federal Lands transportation inventory, while the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) improves transportation facilities that provide access to, are adjacent to, or are located within Federal lands.

a. How does DOI coordinate with DOT to address the deferred maintenance backlog for transportation projects?

Response: The Department works cooperatively and in partnership with the Department of Transportation (DOT) Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to support the maintenance, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction of transportation assets within, adjacent to, or that provide access to, federal lands managed by the Department's bureaus. In addition to the funding supplied via GAOA, the Department's bureaus utilize Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) funding to address deferred maintenance on transportation assets and perform proactive lifecycle maintenance to prevent deferred maintenance.

The Department's bureaus identify candidate projects and prioritize them using several layered strategies to maximize investment decisions, stretch limited funding, and reach performance-based goals on the condition of roads and bridges. These strategies are based on condition data, safety concerns, visitor use, and bureau/Administration priorities. The bureaus then work closely with the FHWA to determine the best delivery method that ensures sound stewardship of taxpayer funds.

b. How does your department ensure efforts are complimentary to DOT's efforts?

Response: The bureaus of the DOI are primarily responsible for planning and programming the FLTP, which improves transportation access on facilities owned by the Federal government. Conversely, the

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP), is implemented by State Departments of Transportation (state DOTs), FHWA, and County governments and federal land management agencies coordinate with these lead agencies and offer advice and input about project applications.

The Department's bureaus develop long range transportation plans (LRTPs) and are establishing management systems for pavement, bridges, congestion, and safety that influence project selection and priorities. The FHWA approves bureau LRTPs, and the bureaus ensure project funding decisions align with LRTP goals and joint national priorities. Further, State DOTs consult with Federal land management agencies when developing their transportation improvement programs to ensure that programs and projects are implemented in a coordinated and cooperative fashion.

Question 3: What is DOI's definition of deferred maintenance? Pursuant to that definition, what is DOI's current deferred maintenance backlog?

Response: The Department uses the Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board definition of deferred maintenance and repairs (DM&R) -- maintenance and repair activity that was not performed when it should have been or was scheduled to be and which is put off or delayed to a future period.

The estimated DM&R for each of the following bureaus of the Department is:

- National Park Service - \$21.8 billion
- Bureau of Land Management - \$4.38 billion
- Bureau of Indian Affairs - \$1.62 billion
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - \$1.76 billion
- U.S Geological Survey - \$180 million
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation - \$156 million

All DM&R estimates are as of Sept. 30, 2021, with the exception of the NPS, whose estimate is as of Dec. 31, 2021. The NPS recently completed a multi-year effort to comprehensively review and reform the systems and processes used to manage its assets, including the methodology used to assess the condition of NPS facilities and generate the DM&R values used for reporting. The changes streamline the NPS' condition assessment process and provide a more comprehensive estimate of the NPS portfolio repair needs.

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

Question 4: Fiscal year 2018 was the last instance when an agency broke down deferred maintenance needs by individual land unit, when NPS provided a park and state-specific deferred maintenance backlog estimates. Specific and up-to-date deferred maintenance estimates are necessary for Congress to provide proper oversight of GAOA implementation.

- a. Can the Department publish and regularly update the monetary amount of deferred maintenance for each bureau, broken down by land unit or location?**

Response: The Department is committed to transparency and providing deferred maintenance and repair (DM&R) estimates annually, broken down by bureau and state. The Department has posted online a complete list of projects undertaken with Legacy Restoration Funding by state (<https://doi.gov/gaoa/projects>). The Department is also working to provide additional DM&R information in the future.

Question 5: Can you explain what leads to deferred maintenance within DOI and why the deferred maintenance backlog grows over time?

Response: The Department's maintains a vast infrastructure, including roads, buildings, utility systems, and other structures and facilities, across its land managing bureaus. This asset portfolio includes both historic and non-historic properties. As assets age, they may become more expensive to repair and maintain in good condition and increased visitation also contributes to increased asset degradation rates.

Although the Legacy Restoration Fund will significantly reduce deferred maintenance across the Department's asset portfolio, the total backlog will continue to grow if there is a gap in the funding of annual maintenance needs. When annual funding to address routine and cyclic maintenance falls short of what is necessary, it leads to asset degradation.

As we move forward with executing the LRF program, we are also using discretionary resources to fund the replacement of critical assets (e.g. bridges, water and wastewater treatment plants, etc.) that have exceeded their expected service life and are at risk of failure and perform as much scheduled annual maintenance as feasible. We also remained focused on funding capital improvements needed to meet visitor capacity demand, allow assets to operate more efficiently, and address code compliance including accessibility and life safety. Our facilities and the national icons entrusted to our care must be in good condition, and we will continue to work with Congress to ensure that these needs are met.

Question 6: NPS receives funding from appropriations along with revenues from recreation fees, commercial service fees, and philanthropic donations. Please explain how these different funding streams contribute to addressing both regular maintenance and deferred maintenance.

Response: The significant size of the LRF funding relative to other sources presents an opportunity for the NPS to address large-scale deferred maintenance projects that cannot realistically be funded through

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

other means. In addition, the following appropriations and revenue sources contribute to addressing both regular and deferred maintenance:

Appropriations:

Cyclic Maintenance – This program provides funding for prioritized projects that focus on addressing preventive, planned maintenance activities and component renewal. Cyclic Maintenance projects are routine in nature and help to ensure that assets and resources can meet their intended design lives and continue to perform efficiently.

Repair and Rehabilitation Program – The program provides funding for prioritized projects that focus on routine and unplanned maintenance, recapitalization, modernization, and disposition/demolition. Repair and rehabilitation projects address complex repair needs that arise on an infrequent or non-recurring basis where preventative maintenance is no longer sufficient to improve the condition of the facility or infrastructure. The projects are designed to restore or improve the condition of a facility or a component, returning the facility to a cyclic schedule.

Line Item Construction - The program provides funding for major maintenance and repair of existing assets, replacement of assets in kind, in addition to construction of new assets. Projects address the highest priority life, health, safety and resource protection issues, as well as needs related to visitor recreation.

Revenue:

Recreation Fees – The program provides funding for a variety of work including operations and maintenance of visitor-facing facilities like visitor centers, campgrounds, restrooms, and trails; facility investments; enhancement of recreational opportunities; and interpretation, law enforcement, and other visitor services. NPS has an expenditure policy that prioritizes 55 percent of recreation fee revenue to deferred and preventative maintenance projects.

Park Concessions Franchise Fees – The program provides funding to pay possessory/leasehold surrender interest accrued when concessioners make improvements to concession facilities, for maintenance on concessions assets, as well as to pay for contract development, programs and operations, and concession activities support.

Department of Transportation Appropriation:

Federal Lands Transportation Program – The program allows NPS and the Federal Highway Administration to partner to maintain and improve the quality and condition of the NPS roads, parking areas, bridges, and tunnels. Additionally, these funds support nearly 100 transit systems and provide for the development of alternative modes of transportation such as multimodal transportation trails and innovative transportation technologies.

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

Question 7: How is DOI prioritizing which projects to take on first? How are you interpreting and aggregating variables like quantity of users, cost of the project, diversity of recreational activities it provides, geographic location, or other aspects to choose which to embark on first?

Response: Across the Department, each of the bureaus, NPS, FWS, BLM and BIE, selects projects with the potential to meet the Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) goals of the Department:

- Improve the Department's financial health
 - Reduce deferred maintenance (high percentage of a project's net construction cost)
 - Support financial leveraging opportunities
 - Reduce annual operating costs
 - Right-size the portfolio (i.e., asset divestiture and/or demolition)
- Maximize citizens served
 - Benefit a large number of visitors (which are often the facilities with the largest amount of deferred maintenance)
 - Improve accessibility for those with disabilities
 - Expand recreation opportunities and public access, including to disadvantaged and underserved communities
 - Remediate the facilities in the poorest condition
- Protect those we serve
 - Improve/enhance public safety and student/workforce safety
 - Improve/enhance fire response/suppression capabilities
- Plan for the future
 - Repair and modernize facilities to support conservation, recreation, and education opportunities into the future
 - Avoid investments in assets that are no longer central to a bureau's mission

In selecting these projects, the bureaus also consider:

- Project readiness (i.e., ability to rapidly initiate work when funding is received)
- Projects that employ sustainable life-cycle asset management strategies and/or with the potential to attract outside investment/contributions
- Projects that support Presidential priorities including: job creation, youth/job corps, climate resiliency, disadvantaged and underserved communities, clean energy, and conservation/resource threat protection

Within these goals, each bureau has established its own step-down, mission-focused criteria and internal guidelines for LRF project selection.

The NPS has established a Maintenance Action Team (MAT) program that is focused on small and medium-sized parks, to enable scalability, additional project delivery options, reduced operational costs/total cost of ownership, and greater opportunities for employee training that complement traditional day labor crews. The NPS dedicated \$14.1 million from the FY21 LRF program to the MATs to address

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

deferred maintenance needs in 33 states and 59 small and medium-sized parks, and \$20 million in similar investments are planned for the MATs in FY23.

Executing the LRF to ensure every dollar spent achieves the maximum impact to the Department's backlog is an overarching priority, while considering accessibility, climate change, natural hazards and sustainability during project development.

Question 8: The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA; P.L. 116-152) established a new fund with mandatory spending authority to address deferred maintenance needs of five federal agencies. The law also made available the deposits to an existing fund—the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)—as mandatory spending and made other changes to the LWCF Act (54 U.S.C. §§200301 et seq.).

a. Can you describe DOI's most important accomplishments in implementing GAOA?

Response: With respect to implementing the National Parks and Public Lands Restoration Fund, the Department has:

- Programmed more than \$4.8 billion of funding for three fiscal years of high priority deferred maintenance projects in under 18 months. These projects span all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands.
- Obligated more than 55% of the Department's FY 2021 funding (\$886 million) and initiated work on 141 projects.
- Completed nine FY 2021 projects including the exterior restoration of the Jefferson Memorial's marble colonnade and the replacement of high-voltage transmission lines and towers at Yosemite National Park that supply power to the entire Yosemite Valley.
- Hosted more than 40 formal meetings, presentations, discussions, and listening sessions with external stakeholder groups, attended by more than 2,000 participants, including federal, state and local philanthropic and non-governmental organization partners, including the National Park Foundation and the National Park Friends Alliance
- Sponsored two widely attended industry day events to introduce GAOA project opportunities to thousands of interested contractors, service providers, and architect/engineering firms.

With respect to the LWCF, the Department initiated 59-line-item land acquisition projects in FY 2021, a 34% increase from the prior year, securing important wildlife corridors, expanding recreational opportunities, and increasing the land's resiliency to climate change. In FY 2021 the Department also expanded the Recreation Access program into five additional States, and the number of planned projects rose to 20, an increase of 54%, which has provided greater access to recreation opportunities such as hunting and fishing. And full mandatory funding for LWCF more than doubled available grant funding, increasing support for LWCF State grants and the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership competitive grant program, enabling urban communities to create new outdoor recreation spaces, reinvigorate existing

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

parks, and form connections between people and the outdoors in economically disadvantaged and underserved communities.

The Department also held a listening session with a wide range of stakeholders to discuss the LWCF program and its future in order to broaden engagement and benefit as many states and local communities as possible. In addition to discussing ways to strengthen the program, the sessions focused on ways to leverage the LWCF programs to advance biodiversity, climate resilience, and increased equity and access. The Department also held two sessions with Tribal Nations, engaging over 80 representatives from Tribal governments and Inter-Tribal organizations. These sessions were the first formal discussions with Tribes about the LWCF programs and provided background on the programs and discussed past and future opportunities for partnerships. The information garnered from these sessions flagged areas for improvement and further discussions which will help to shape the LWCF program moving forward.

Question 9: How can agencies and Congress ensure projects funded through GAOA are durable and resilient to long-term outdoor recreation use, or extreme weather events and other natural disasters, and will not just end up back on the maintenance backlog in the future?

Response: Extreme weather events and natural disasters always pose challenges for agency-maintained infrastructure. As we move forward, we are ensuring that GAOA Legacy Restoration Fund projects consider resilience, climate change adaptation, and sustainability during project development. The Department will continue to support and encourage sound long-term investments by emphasizing lowest lifecycle investment, cost effective modernization, resilience, and sustainability opportunities to support its assets.

Question 10: Given the delay in distribution of funds for LWCF Stateside Assistance, what is DOI working on to ensure states are receiving the funds in an efficient manner to invest in local communities?

Response: LWCF funding is apportioned annually to each state by the Secretary, but the actual distribution of funds occurs on a project-by-project basis, which starts with states identifying and working with local recipients to prepare and submit applications to the NPS. Despite the increase in funding, many states have been challenged with taking steps to add capacity to enhance their own ability to manage the funds, which in turn has reduced their ability to work with local partners to identify projects, as well as aid them in properly preparing complete applications for NPS review and approval. The NPS is working to address these issues by expanding its operational capacity through planned increases in staffing, which will allow for greater levels of technical assistance and resources to review and process new grant applications. The FY 2023 President's Budget for the NPS also proposes a general provision to allow the NPS to apportion matching funds to states to support state administrative costs.

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

Question 11: The federal land acquisition process requires lengthy and complex procedures and numerous steps, ranging from federal appraisal reviews and environmental site assessments. How can DOI ensure that various agencies work seamlessly to minimize these lengthy and complicated factors that impact willing sellers and non-federal entities?

Response: At the Department, land acquisition generally involves coordination between the acquiring bureau (for most due diligence, including boundary, environmental and historic site assessments), the Office of the Solicitor (to provide legal assistance and title review), and the Department’s Appraisal and Valuation Services Office (to prepare, or oversee the preparation of, the appraisal). The Department continues to consider ways to streamline the land acquisition process while still ensuring that we are meeting our Constitutional and legal responsibilities. Earlier coordination, streamlining compliance steps, and developing strategies to ensure that there is sufficient planning and resource allocation to meet our mission goals are all possible ways to increase overall efficiency of the acquisition process.

Question 12: Under GAOA, mandatory appropriations under the LWCF Act are available “to carry out the purposes of the Fund,” including accounts and programs funded from the LWCF under P.L. 116-94.

- a. How many acres of land have DOI agencies purchased with LWCF funds to date?**
- b. How has DOI’s approach change with the new mandatory funds?**
- c. To what extent will DOI agencies use the funding to acquire permanent and temporary easements and other interests in land (rather than full ownership)?**

Response to a, b and c: Since October 1, 2020, with LWCF funding, the FWS has acquired over 18,000 acres in fee and 14,000 acres of conservation easements, the NPS has acquired 275.31 acres in fee, and the BLM has acquired approximately 47,100 acres in fee. Other acquisitions are in process. The funding certainty provided under GAOA facilitates discussions with willing sellers and conservation partners and offers the probability of enhanced conservation and recreation opportunities in local communities and on public lands. The bureaus continue to implement mission-focused acquisitions and are in the process of reviewing the Federal land acquisition programs to ensure that our organizational structure and business practices are equipped to meet the expanded funding opportunities provided by GAOA.

In certain instances, perpetual conservation easements can be an important, mutually beneficial tool to conserve habitat and wildlife while supporting ranching and farming families and their operations. In other instances, conservation easements may be sought to provide for public use of forest land while it remains as a working forest.

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

Question 13: Forty percent of LWCF are required to go to the state side program. In order for these funds to be effectively utilized on state priority projects the state side office coordinates with states to develop a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

- a. Please provide a complete list of SCORP plans and the date on which each was approved.
- b. Now that the LWCF of permanent and fully funded, is NPS working with states to update SCORPs so they are able to distribute state side funds effectively?

Response to a and b: Since the beginning of the program, there has been a requirement to update SCORPs on a 5-year cycle. However, due to reduced capacity at the state level, a majority of states are unable to meet this timeline. As longtime SCORP planners have retired, their positions have been left vacant or eliminated, so most states contract out the planning effort, which increases the time required for completion and reduces continuity and value between planning efforts. NPS's organizational expansion plan includes reconstituting a planning division so that there will be staff dedicated to working with states on SCORP development. A list of SCORPs with approval dates is attached.

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

Questions from Senator Daines

Question 1: Ms. Estenoz, please provide an estimate of the percentage of Legacy Restoration funds that have been spent on environmental reviews for projects. Please also provide an estimated average cost for environmental reviews for an individual project.

Response: The Department estimates a very small percentage of GAOA LRF funds has been spent on environmental review to date (less than 1%). Environmental review and compliance work for many of DOI's fiscal year (FY) 2021 projects were completed using non-GAOA funding sources. Nearly half (47%) of the Department's FY 2021 projects were "procurement ready" and an additional (44%) were in the "planning and design" stage.

For each of its GAOA LRF projects, the Department supplies Congress with a detailed data sheet that includes an estimate of the project's planning and design costs. These FY 2021 project data sheets report anticipated spending of approximately \$30.2 million (1.87%) of the GAOA LRF funding on project planning. The costs for environmental reviews are only one component of project planning. Examples of other planning costs include: geotechnical studies, value engineering analysis, and a range of other studies/supplemental services depending on the nature of the project.

Compliance with resource protection laws such as the National Historic Preservation Act and National Environmental Policy Act are not only critically dependent and integrated functions of project planning, design, and management, they are the cornerstone of our obligation to fulfill the agency mission to preserve the natural and cultural resources and values of the Department.

Question 2: Ms. Estenoz, over the past two years Montana has seen significant population growth, in part, due to our outstanding opportunities for outdoor recreation. Are there aspects of the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership program that you believe could be expanded or altered to ensure local parks, recreation, and outdoor opportunities continue to receive support in places like Montana? Has the Department identified any barriers to fully implementing this program in a way that serves changing and growing western communities?

Response: The Outdoor Recreation Legacy Program's eligibility criteria were established to ensure that every state would have cities eligible to participate. Montana had three such cities in the 2010 Census – Billings, Missoula, and Great Falls – but the state has not participated in any of the five ORLP rounds to date. Eligibility will be re-evaluated when urban data from the 2020 Census is available, which could result in additional cities in Montana becoming eligible.

Question 3: Ms. Estenoz, how does the Department of the Interior's appraisal process differ from the Forest Service's process? Is there any reason why DOI needs to have a separate office when the Forest Service manages their own appraisal process?

Response: Since 2003, appraisals at the Department have been managed by the Department's Appraisal and Valuation Services Office (AVSO) and its precursor organizations. This Departmental appraisal

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

office was established after a series of audits by the Government Accountability Office and Department's Office of Inspector General between 1991-2001, which found a lack of appraisal independence and a failure to follow established federal appraisal standards to meet program goals within various bureau appraisal offices. To ensure appraiser independence, accountability, high standards, appropriate training, and oversight of the Departmental appraisal functions, the bureau appraisal staff were consolidated into a single Departmental appraisal office.

With respect to valuation determinations, the Department and the Forest Service utilize similar appraisal standards, subject only to the varying missions of the acquiring agencies. In addition, the Forest Service also utilizes a regional approach, allowing the same group of appraisers and review appraisers in an identified region to facilitate contracting actions and allow closer coordination with regional bureau realty staff. The Department is in the process of shifting appraisal operations to this approach within AVSO to create more flexibility across the portfolio and, as with the Forest Service, to allow the same group of appraisers and review appraisers to work closely with bureau realty staff in their respective regions.

Question 4: Ms. Estenoz, in regards to the 73 Ranch, the land trust appraisal and what the property ultimately sold for, to a separate entity, was more than double the Department of the Interior's AVSO appraisal. What criteria and processes changed between the Bureau of Land Management's hired appraiser and the land trust's appraiser to result in such a discrepancy?

Response: Although AVSO has not seen the land trust appraisal, the AVSO has had conversations with the parties involved and noted two key differences between the appraisals: the valuation of federal grazing permits and the use of sales made to non-governmental organizations for conservation purposes present in the land trust appraisal.

The use of sales to non-governmental organizations requires additional verification to ensure that they are arm's length transactions and not motivated by non-market factors such as the government's overall acquisition plan in the subject area or donative intent of the seller for tax purposes. With respect to the valuation of federal grazing permits, numerous court cases including the U.S. Supreme Court in *United States v. Fuller*, 409 U.S. 488, 492-93 (1973) have found that any value added to a property by federal grazing permits should be disregarded. The reason is that federal grazing permits issued under either the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 (43 U.S.C. 315(b)(2012)) or the Granger-Thye Act of 1950 (16 U.S.C. 580l)(2012)) are revocable and convey no property rights to the holder of the permit. Because the United States would be acquiring a property interest it already owns, the permits are not considered in the determination of the highest and best use, or the market value of the property interest being acquired.

Question 5: Ms. Estenoz, has the Department of the Interior identified anything in statute or regulation that affects the appraisal process's ability to be flexible and reflect changing market values or requires the completion of Yellowbook appraisals rather than a USAP compliant appraisal?

Response: Currently the Department, working through AVSO, does not require the use of the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions (the Yellow Book) for all appraisals. For federal land

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

management bureaus within the Department, only 65% of the appraisals completed by AVSO required Yellow Book compliance. While the Department is bound by existing statutes and regulations, some degree of flexibility does exist. The Department is exploring these areas of flexibility, while ensuring a transparent, accountable appraisal process.

Question 7: Ms. Estenoz, why does it take so long for AVSO to complete an appraisal? Over the last five fiscal years, what is the average time it takes to complete an appraisal by AVSO? And how does that compare to the time it took the individual DOI agencies to prepare appraisals prior to the creation of AVSO?

Response: For appraisals related to federal land acquisitions at the Department, from March of 2018 to present, the median time taken for acquisition appraisals for the LWCF agencies is 177 calendar days from receipt of an appraisal request to delivery of an approved appraisal report. The time to complete the appraisal itself is dependent largely on the availability of contract appraisers and the terms of the contract, but takes between 75-90 days. The appraisal is only one part of the overall land acquisition process. The general appraisal timeframe breaks down as follows for a contracted appraisal:

Table 1 – Acquisition Appraisal Phases			
Days	Phase	Responsible Party	Activities
1-30	Engagement	AVSO/bureau realty	Appraisal request received, missing due diligence obtained, statement of work drafted
31-60	Contracting	AVSO/Interior Business Center – Acquisition Services Directorate (IBC-AQD)	Depending on procurement methodology (federal contract, government purchase card, non-federal party payment, in-house appraisal), a solicitation package is prepared, proposals are reviewed, contract awarded
61-135	Appraisal (approx. 75-90 days)	Contract Appraiser/AVSO	Appraisal is completed by private fee appraiser or AVSO in-house appraiser. Largely dependent on the appraiser’s availability on the contract.
135-165	Appraisal Review	AVSO/Contract Appraiser	Appraisal is reviewed and any necessary revisions are made.
165-180	Closeout and Delivery	AVSO/Bureau Realty	Results of appraisal review are delivered to bureau, records completed and closed out

Appraisal records are only kept in archives for a total of seven years so much of the information regarding the days to completion when appraisers were employees of the bureaus is unavailable. However, we are not aware of a significant deviation from this timeframe. As a general matter, simple assignments are completed faster, and complex assignments take longer.

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

Question 8: Ms. Estenoz, in the example of the 73 Ranch, the land trust used an appraiser recommended by the Bureau of Land management and subsequently learned that the appraisal was not acceptable by the agency. Would the Department of the Interior consider publishing a list of qualified appraisers to ensure this does not happen in the future?

Response: AVSO compiles a list of qualified appraisers for each appraisal assignment, considering the location and composition of the property to be appraised and any other assignment complexities. However, each appraisal report must still be reviewed to ensure that the report adequately supports the final value conclusion and reasonably meets the appraisal standards required for the assignment. The Department will look into the issue of publishing a list of qualified appraisers, understanding that there may be legal and other reasons not to do so.

Question 9: Ms. Estenoz, is there any statutory reason why the Department would not move the appraisal function back into the individual Bureaus so that the desired outcome of completing appraisals in 3 months or less could be restored, resulting in improved conservation outcomes, providing better customer service to willing sellers and ensuring the successful execution of GAOA for the American public?

Response: As stated at the hearing, the question of streamlining the time necessary to complete a federal land acquisition is an important one that the Department is reviewing. To maximize the benefits of the Great American Outdoors Act, it is critical for the Department to implement the goals of the LWCF program as quickly as possible, while ensure the integrity of the program and benefits to the American public. We are working with all offices and bureaus in the Department to find the proper balance.

Question 10: Ms. Estenoz, the Department of the Interior Yellowbook specifically prohibits grazing permits from being included in land valuation. This could result in undervaluing parcels that are being considered from a cattle operation valuation. Has the Department looking into this issue?

Response: The Yellow Book, or Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions (UASFLA), is not a Department of the Interior document. Instead, these government-wide appraisal standards were developed by the Interagency Land Acquisition Conference -- a conference formed by the U.S. Department of Justice -- to promote fairness, uniformity, and efficiency in the appraisal of real property in federal land acquisitions in accordance with appraisal industry standards and the requirement of the 5th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that no property shall "be taken for public use without just compensation."

With respect to the valuation of federal grazing permits, numerous court cases, including the U.S. Supreme Court in *United States v. Fuller*, 409 U.S. 488, 492-93 (1973), have found that a value added to a property by the federal grazing permits should be disregarded. The reason is that federal grazing permits issued under either the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 (43 U.S.C. 315(b)(2012)) or the Granger-Thye Act of 1950 (16 U.S.C. 580f)(2012)) are revocable and create no property rights in the holder of the permit. Because the United States would be acquiring a property interest it already owns, the permits are

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

not considered in the determination of the highest and best use of the property, or the market value of the property interest being acquired.

Question 11: Ms. Estenoz, the Great American Outdoors Act provided a historic investment to upgrade and restore infrastructure on our public lands. Some have noted that this legislation did not, however, improve capacity at the agency which can hinder completing projects. What is the Department of the Interior currently doing to address staffing capacity? Specifically, what is the agency doing to streamline processes, expand public-private partnerships, and leverage contracting authorities and shared stewardship agreements with states to maximize the amount of work that is completed with these funds?

Response: The Great American Outdoors Act combines a financial commitment to conservation and recreation for future generations with a significant investment in the facilities needed to carry out the Department's important mission, including the care and maintenance of America's national treasures. To implement this legislation, the Department must ensure that it has sufficient staffing to successfully carry out the project management needs of the Legacy Restoration Fund and the land acquisition and grant programs of the LWCF. The Department is committed to this goal and has made significant progress in staffing since the enactment of the GAOA.

Question 12: Ms. Estenoz, does the Park Service coordinate with the other bureaus within Interior and is there coordination with the Forest Service when selecting projects for the Legacy Restoration Fund?

Response: When selecting projects to received LRF funds, the Great American Outdoors Act Program Management Office (GAOA PMO) facilitates a weekly meeting with the NPS, FWS, BLM, and BIE to promote adherence to a common GAOA LRF program execution strategy and drive consistency of approach through coordinated planning, information sharing, and after-action reviews. These meetings are attended by a multidisciplinary group of program managers, budget analysts, contracting personnel, and communicators. Bureaus benefit from hearing about each other's approaches to project selection, program management, and challenges/solutions. Although bureaus have separate and distinct processes for identifying, analyzing, and selecting LRF projects, all bureaus benefit from the cross-pollination of ideas and information sharing that occurs on a weekly basis.

In addition, the GAOA PMO and the U.S. Forest Service have a strong working relationship with consistent communication on program formulation and execution for the LRF. The processes each agency employs to select projects are independent from one another, but best practices are shared and adapted to ensure the most effective approach.

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

Question 13: Ms. Estenoz, can you please breakdown how much Legacy Restoration funding has been allocated for projects in the following categories: employee housing, transportation, trail maintenance, visitor buildings, and water infrastructure?

Response: The Department’s approximate fiscal year 2021 - 2023 funding allocations in each of the five categories requested are as follows:

Category	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023
Employee Housing	\$ 69.0 million	\$ 9.75 million	\$ 3.6 million
Transportation	\$ 746.5 million	\$ 420.1 million	\$ 96.0 million
Trail Maintenance	\$ 3.4 million	\$ 28.2 million	\$ 0.9 million
Visitor Buildings	\$ 207.8 million	\$ 230.9 million	\$ 331.3 million
Water Infrastructure	\$ 175.8 million	\$ 356.0 million	\$ 414.9 million

Please note these are rough estimates. For some LRF projects, these categories are included in the scope of a larger investment that includes additional assets/categories. The numbers in the table above reflect the total project cost since LRF funding is allocated to the project, not to the individual assets or categories that comprise its scope.

Question 14: Ms. Estenoz, how many people are employed in the Great American Outdoors Act Program Management Office and does the management and salaries for that office come from the LWCF or the Legacy Restoration Fund?

Response: The Great American Outdoors Act Program Management Office (GAOA PMO), is responsible for the Department-wide oversight and coordination of the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) and its operating costs are funded by the LRF. The GAOA PMO has six employees.

Question 15: Ms. Estenoz, please provide the latest dollar estimate, for each individual bureau, of outstanding maintenance backlog projects.

Response: The estimated deferred maintenance and repair (DM&R) for each of the following bureaus of the Department is:

- National Park Service - \$21.8 billion
- Bureau of Land Management - \$4.38 billion
- Bureau of Indian Affairs - \$1.62 billion
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - \$1.76 billion
- U.S Geological Survey - \$180 million
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation - \$156 million

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

All DM&R estimates are as of Sept. 30, 2021, with the exception of the NPS, whose estimate is as of Dec. 31, 2021. The NPS recently completed a multi-year effort to comprehensively review and reform the systems and processes used to manage its assets, including the methodology used to assess the condition of NPS facilities and generate the DM&R values used for reporting. The changes streamline the NPS' condition assessment process and provide a more comprehensive, consistent, and timely identification of condition deficiencies and estimate of the NPS portfolio repair needs.

Question 16: Ms. Estenoz, what is the total amount in dollars that have been allocated for projects in Montana (including projects in Yellowstone National Park) under the Legacy Restoration Fund? Please provide breakdown by bureau.

Response: All projects funded by the LRF are posted on the Department's website: doi.gov/gaoa/projects. For fiscal years 2021 – 2022, the Department programmed more than \$387 million for LRF projects in the state of Montana, including Yellowstone National Park. The table below contains a breakdown by bureau, district/unit, and fiscal year.

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

BLM		
Eastern Montana District		
FY21	Acton Road Gravel	\$ 250,000
FY21	Crooked Creek Road Repair Planning and Design	\$ 375,000
FY21	Eastern Montana Dakota District Fog Seal	\$ 250,000
FY21	Stellar Creek Road Repair	\$ 470,000
North Central District		
FY21	Grub Dam Rehabilitation	\$ 1,793,000
FY21	South Fork Dry Blood Creek Detention Dam Repair (Phase 1 of 2)	\$ 985,000
Western Montana District		
FY21	Axolotl Lakes Road Resurfacing	\$ 440,000
FY21	Beartooth Landing Dock	\$ 30,000
FY21	Big Hole Recreation Sites Maintenance and Restoration	\$ 833,000
FY21	Carbella Boat Ramp Repair	\$ 150,000
FY21	Monida Creek Dam #1 and #2 Repair	\$ 471,000
FY21	Moose Creek Road Resurfacing	\$ 450,000
FY21	Ruby Creek Road Chip Seal (Phase 2 of 2)	\$ 146,000
Eastern Montana Dakotas, North Central, and Western Montana Districts		
FY22	Montana / Dakotas Recreation, Roads, and Dam Repairs	\$ 6,140,000
NPS		
Glacier National Park		
FY21	Rehabilitate Final 9.3 miles of the Going-to-the-Sun Road & Replace Bridge Over McDonald Creek	\$ 22,811,630
FY22	Replace Headquarters Wastewater System	\$ 10,921,000
FY22	Replace Swiftcurrent Water Distribution System	\$ 15,726,000
Yellowstone National Park		
FY21	Lewis River Bridge	\$ 37,225,000
FY21	Old Faithful to West Thumb, 3R	\$ 50,170,000
FY21	Rehabilitate and Reconfigure the Historic Laurel Dormitory at Old Faithful	\$ 21,140,000
FY21	Rehabilitate Exteriors of Fort Yellowstone Structures	\$ 22,331,400
FY22	Rehabilitate and Improve Old Faithful Water Treatment System and Demolish Abandoned Wastewater Treatment Plant	\$ 20,112,000
FY22	Rehabilitate/Replace Canyon & Grant Village Wastewater Collection and Treatment Systems	\$ 52,588,000
FY22	Replace Mammoth Wastewater Collection System	\$ 9,327,000
FY22	Replace the Yellowstone River Bridge	\$ 71,200,000
Grand Total		\$ 346,335,030

Question 17: Ms. Estenoz, is the criteria and methodology for project prioritization under the Legacy Restoration Fund the same for each bureau? If different, please provide an explanation of the differences.

Response: Across the Department, each of the bureaus, NPS, FWS, BLM and BIE, selects projects with the potential to meet the Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) goals of the Department:

- Improve the Department's financial health
 - Reduce deferred maintenance (high percentage of a project's net construction cost)
 - Support financial leveraging opportunities

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

- Reduce annual operating costs
- Right-size the portfolio (i.e., asset divestiture and/or demolition)
- Maximize citizens served
 - Benefit a large number of visitors (which are often the facilities with the largest amount of deferred maintenance)
 - Improve accessibility for those with disabilities
 - Expand recreation opportunities and public access
 - Remediate the facilities in the poorest condition
- Protect those we serve
 - Improve/enhance public safety and student/workforce safety
 - Improve/enhance fire response/suppression capabilities
- Plan for the future
 - Repair and modernize facilities to support conservation, recreation, and education opportunities into the future
 - Avoid investments in assets that are no longer central to a bureau's mission

In selecting these projects, the bureaus also consider additional factors:

- Project readiness (i.e., ability to rapidly initiate work when funding is received)
- Projects that employ sustainable life-cycle asset management strategies and/or with the potential to attract outside investment/contributions
- Projects that support Presidential priorities including: job creation, youth/job corps, climate resiliency, underserved communities, clean energy, and conservation/resource threat protection

Within these goals, each bureau has established its own step-down, mission-focused criteria and internal guidelines for LRF project selection.

The NPS evaluates and prioritizes potential projects based on the following criteria:

- Critical assets at risk of failure
- Impact to life, health, safety, and the environment
- Percentage of net construction that would address deferred maintenance
- Accessibility
- Opportunity for demolition or disposal of facilities that are no longer needed

The NPS also considers a project's size/cost, readiness for obligation, and the park's plans for maintaining the restored facilities and infrastructure in an acceptable condition throughout their remaining lifecycles. While the LRF is the newest and largest source of deferred maintenance funding, the NPS balances its priorities across multiple discretionary, mandatory, and supplemental appropriations to ensure funding is distributed to meet the most critical needs across parks as conditions and funds availability changes.

The FWS evaluates and prioritizes its LRF investments based on their contribution to long-range plans and objectives, readiness for execution, and impact on reducing the maintenance backlog. In doing so,

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

FWS adheres to the “National Wildlife Refuge System Deferred Maintenance and Transportation Allocation and Strategic Investment Strategy” which identifies the following areas of emphasis:

- **Outdoor Recreation and Supporting Habitat Infrastructure**
 - Investing in the highest public use field stations
 - Retaining, restoring, and enhancing sportsmen access and outdoor recreation
 - Leveraging deferred maintenance and Federal Lands Transportation Program investments with construction appropriations, grants, and partnerships for maximum impact
- **Connecting with Communities**
 - Strategically focusing on urban refuges and the top 10% most visited field stations supporting 80% of the public use, and more than one-third of the bureau’s maintenance backlog
- **Building Consolidation, Co-location and Replacement**
 - Completing proactive lifecycle investments to prevent deferred maintenance, resulting in maximizing the return on the American taxpayer’s investment

To maximize the impact of LRF funding, the BLM is prioritizing the following types of investments:

- Projects that will significantly reduce the maintenance backlog
- Repairs to assets that impact public safety
- Assets in need of repair at highly visited and high-use recreation sites
- Demolition/disposal of assets that are no longer needed to fulfill BLM’s mission
- Projects that complete proactive lifecycle investments to slow the growth of deferred maintenance backlog into the future

The BIE selects projects based on the project’s ability to improve the safety and overall condition of the education facility, reduce the maintenance backlog, protect critical resources, and provide an environment conducive to learning. BIE’s three focus areas for LRF investment are as follows:

- Replacement construction and improvements/repairs at facilities with the poorest condition.
- Demolishing unsafe and uninhabitable buildings to provide safer campus environments.
- Repairing staff quarters at priority school locations to improve the health and retention of school staff.

Question 18: Ms. Estenoz, if the Park Service continues its current trend of funding and project selection, about what percentage of the existing total deferred maintenance backlog will be completed during the five-year life of the fund?

Response: For fiscal years 2021 and 2022, the Department has funded 230 projects for a total investment of more than \$3.2 billion from the Legacy Restoration Fund to address critical deferred maintenance projects and improve transportation and recreation infrastructure on national parks, national wildlife

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

refuges and recreation areas, and at Bureau of Indian Education schools. Collectively, these investments are expected to retire more than \$2.4 billion of deferred maintenance at project completion.

NPS facility project funding sources are directed toward reducing the large and growing backlog, in addition to funding scheduled annual maintenance needs and improvements required to meet visitor capacity demand, allow assets to operate more efficiently, and address code compliance including accessibility and life safety.

The LRF will reduce deferred maintenance on portions of the NPS asset portfolio, however the total backlog may continue to grow if there is a gap in the funding provided for annual maintenance needs. This year-over-year gap between the maintenance funding available and the estimate requirements leads to Service-wide portfolio deterioration.

Question 19: Ms. Estenoz, the Montana Conservation Corps has partnered with the Forest Service on numerous projects which has resulted in cost savings for the program as well as invaluable experiences for young adults in Montana. How can the Park Service better work with communities, local companies and conservation corps to save money, build jobs, and help communities?

Response: The Great American Outdoors Act is historic legislation that brings a significant investment in America's parks, public lands, and communities. GAOA funding will allow the Department to create new partnerships and expand existing ones, create jobs, enhance recreation opportunities, and improve access to public lands for local communities.

One of the ways that the NPS is working with the Service and Conservation Corps, veterans, volunteers, and other partners is through our Maintenance Action Teams (MATs). The MATs will pair its seasoned NPS facility-related staff, who have knowledge in project delivery and the building trades, with the next generation of facility managers, building trades workers, and craftspeople through MAT cross-training experiences. These teams will focus on small and medium sized park units, which are often the least-well positioned to have a full maintenance staff that includes various trades and disciplines to fully scope, design, and execute facility projects. The MATs will complete rehabilitation and preservation projects with the support of Service and Conservation Corps, Veterans, volunteers, and other partners in an environment that will simultaneously encourage networking across the NPS while sharing knowledge through project execution and on-the-job training opportunities.

Question 20: Ms. Estenoz, the Fish and Wildlife Service is sometimes restricted in what landscapes LWCF dollars can be spent. With the guaranteed funding realized by the Great American Outdoors Act, should we consider removing these restrictions or expanding eligible conservation areas to provide more opportunities for conservation in Montana?

Response: Although GAOA provided mandatory moneys for the LWCF, the FWS must still responsibly manage and strategically grow the National Wildlife Refuge System. The FWS uses science-based decision making to direct this growth, in close coordination with local communities, businesses, landowners, non-governmental organizations, Tribes, local governments, and other interested parties to

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

identify management boundaries. In Montana, the National Wildlife Refuge System has a focus on keeping working lands working while achieving its conservation goals. There are sufficient flexibilities within its authorities to provide for conservation opportunities.

Question 21: Ms. Estenez, can you please breakdown how much funding has been allocated to the top 20 most visited parks versus the remaining 415 sites under the National Park Service?

Response: The table below reflects FY21 and FY22 funding allocations made from the Great American Outdoors Act for Land Acquisition funding and the Legacy Restoration Fund, for the top 20 most visited parks and all other remaining parks.

Park Name	LWCF Land Acquisition	LRF**
National Mall & Memorial Parks	\$0	\$10,190
Blue Ridge Parkway	\$2,500	\$218,437
Great Smoky Mountains NP	\$0	\$59,070
Golden Gate NRA	\$20	\$45,358
Gateway NRA	\$0	\$47,581
Lake Mead NRA	\$1,150	\$31,468
George Washington Memorial Parkway	\$0	\$207,800
Natchez Trace Parkway, Natchez Trace NST, Brices Cross Roads NBS, Tupelo NB	\$0	\$61,246
Zion NP	\$1,950	\$11,253
Chesapeake & Ohio Canal NHP	\$465	\$22,811
Gulf Islands NS	\$0	\$0
Yellowstone NP	\$0	\$216,846
Delaware Water Gap NRA	\$0	\$21,518
Grand Canyon NP	\$0	\$60,679
Rocky Mountain NP	\$0	\$31,976
Cape Cod NS	\$725	\$12,572
Acadia NP	\$995	\$34,496
Grand Teton NP	\$7,000	\$51,366
Cape Hatteras Group - Cape Hatteras NS, Fort Raleigh NHS, Wright Brothers NMem	\$0	\$0
Chattahoochee River NRA	\$1,500	\$0
All Else*	\$118,448	\$1,243,626

*All else includes: (1) project funding at park units not among FY 2021's top 20 most visited parks and (2) LRF indirect costs, contingency, planning, compliance, and central project management

**LRF data as of June 6, 2022.

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

Question 22: Ms. Estenoz, there are some states like California and Mississippi that have received over \$100 million and other states like Idaho and South Dakota that have received \$0 from the Park Service. How does your methodology take into consideration previous funding locations?

Response: In the 18 months since establishment of the Legacy Restoration Fund, the Department has programed more than \$4.8 billion of funding (for FY 2021-23) for high priority deferred maintenance projects, spanning all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands.

With respect to the NPS, maintenance and repair needs vary significantly by park. The LRF is one of several funding sources available to tackle facility projects in the national parks. Projects might include preventative maintenance, replacement of parts, systems, or components, alterations, or capital improvements.

As with all NPS investments, priority was given to projects that protect the safety of NPS visitors, partners, employees, and the natural and cultural resources the bureau safeguards. NPS also considered whether the project would address a significant amount of deferred maintenance, the business case for the investment, and ensuring that restored facilities and infrastructure could be maintained in acceptable condition throughout their respective life cycles. Project size is certainly a consideration when selecting GAOA LRF projects, but smaller projects are not eliminated from LRF funding consideration purely because of their size. LRF is one of the main funding source for extra-large projects.

Question 23: Ms. Estenoz, the Great American Outdoors Act authorizes the Secretary to accept “public cash or in-kind donations” to reduce the deferred maintenance backlog and foster public-private partnerships. What is the total amount of public donations the secretary has received for the Legacy Restoration Fund?

Response: Executing the LRF in a manner that maximizes the reduction of bureau maintenance and repair backlogs is the Department’s highest priority. The Department routinely briefs stakeholders and partner organizations, including the National Park Foundation and the National Park Friends Alliance, on LRF program status to help raise awareness and generate ideas for additional partnering and fund-raising opportunities. One example of how LRF funding is being financially leveraged is at Independence National Historical Park in Pennsylvania, where the NPS plans to rehabilitate for public visitation the interior and exterior of the First Bank of the United States, and the philanthropic partner of Independence National Historical Park, the Independence Historical Trust, is supporting the project's design and construction documents, at an estimated value of \$3 million.

Question 24: Ms. Estenoz, are donations solicited under the Great American Outdoors Act earmarked for specific projects?

Response: If requested by the donor or solicited for a specific purpose, donations accepted under GAOA LRF can be allocated to specific projects.

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

Question 25: Ms. Estenoz, in what ways has the Department advocated for, encouraged, or solicited donations for the Legacy Restoration Fund?

Response: Since the enactment of GAOA in August 2020, the Department and its bureaus have hosted more than 40 formal meetings, presentations, discussions, and listening sessions with external stakeholder groups, attended by more than 2,000 participants, including federal, state and local philanthropic and non-governmental organization partners such as the National Park Foundation and the National Park Friends Alliance. By actively engaging these organizations, the Department anticipates future support in the form of contributions/donations and project advancement opportunities.

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

Questions from Senator Hirono

Question 1: One of my priorities is to see workforce development programs such as Service and Conservation Corps carry out some of the projects funded by the Legacy Restoration Fund. I understand that Corps partners have been engaged on U.S. Forest Service projects. However, the National Park Service is still standing up their Maintenance Action Teams, or MATs, which aren't expected to conduct partner outreach until FY23.

Why has it taken DOI so long to get to a place where they can engage these partners on projects? Since the department will not be engaging these partners until year 3 of a 5-year fund, should we expect heavy engagement going forward? Will the Department provide some indication on which MATs projects funded by the Legacy Restoration Fund are eligible for partner engagement in future budget requests? What resources do you need from Congress to help in this area?

Response: Maintenance Action Teams (MATs) are a cost-effective method to address deferred maintenance while strengthening capacities within the NPS workforce. The MAT teams pair seasoned facility-related staff with knowledge in project delivery and the building trades with the next generation of facility managers, building trades workers, and craftspeople. Focusing primarily on small and medium sized park units, the MATs complete projects with the support of Service and Conservation Corps, veterans, volunteers, and other partners, sharing knowledge through project execution and on-the-job training opportunities. The NPS intends to expand the MAT program each year, gradually building a strong and successful program that maximizes our ability to reach parks, communities, and partners throughout all NPS units. We have already partnered with students in NPS DOI Region 1 on these types of programs, and will continue to build this program.

Question 2: With bills that require agencies to get large amounts of funding out the door, like the Great American Outdoors Act, I understand that staffing issues often arise.

Does DOI have the resources and hiring authority necessary to get staff set up to administer projects funded by this bill? If not, how can Congress help?

Response: The Great American Outdoors Act combines a financial commitment to conservation and recreation for future generations with a significant investment in the facilities needed to carry out the Department's important mission, including the care and maintenance of America's national treasures. To implement this legislation, the Department must ensure that it has sufficient staffing to successfully carry out the project management needs of the Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) and the land acquisition and grant programs of the LWCF. The Department is committed to this goal and has made significant progress in staffing since the enactment of the GAOA.

With respect to the LRF, the Department has filled many positions using term authority. Given that many LRF projects will extend beyond traditional term authority limits, the Department is working with OPM to expand the positions included in their proposed ten-year term rule to include those vital to support LRF. Such positions include 800-series (architecture and engineering) and "wage grade" positions. The

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

ability to hire ten-year term positions will help expand the size and quality of applicant pools and increase efficiency with reduced turnover and onboarding costs. Other hiring flexibilities such as special pay authority for hard to fill positions and the use of expedited service Schedule A appointments under 5 CFR 213.3102(i)(3) would be beneficial.

With respect to the LWCF, the Department anticipates an increased demand for appraisals for Federal land acquisition. The special pay rate approved by OPM on May 25, 2022, for appraisers in the GS-1171 Appraising series will be helpful in recruiting and retention. Additionally, Direct Hire Authority may be another tool to help facilitate onboarding of qualified appraisers interested in working on the Department's conservation projects.

Question 3: Thus far, the only funding that Hawaii has received from the Legacy Restoration Fund has been to restore some sidewalks at Kalaupapa National Historic Park. While that is a very important project that I'm glad to see get completed, that pales in comparison to large projects like the \$123 M award to the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Can you discuss how the small projects are treated versus the larger projects? If the majority of funding is going to larger projects in the initial years, can we expect more smaller projects to be funded in later years?

Response: Deferred maintenance and repair (DM&R) needs vary significantly by park. The LRF is supplemental to other facility project funding sources available, and NPS looks across all fund sources to determine which is the best fit for a specific maintenance project, taking into consideration each fund source's ceiling and the legislative restrictions on its use. For example, in Haleakala National Park, recreation fees collected pursuant to the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act were used in FY 2021 to Repair the Kipahulu Halē Ku'ai Traditional Native Hawaiian Hale, and at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Federal Lands Transportation Funds (in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration) were used to realign Crater Rim Drive and construct new visitor center parking.

As with all NPS investments, LRF priority is given to projects that protect the safety of NPS visitors, partners, employees, and the natural and cultural resources the bureau safeguards. NPS also considers whether a project will address a significant amount of deferred maintenance, the business case for the investment, and whether the restored facilities and infrastructure can be maintained in acceptable condition throughout their respective life cycles. Project size is certainly a consideration when selecting GAOA LRF projects, but smaller projects are not eliminated from LRF funding consideration purely because of their size. However, LRF is generally the most viable NPS funding source for extra-large projects.

Additionally, NPS has proposed as part of its FY 2023 project list, the rehabilitation of an estimated 64 miles of perimeter exclusionary fencing to protect native ecosystems and watersheds from damage by large numbers of invasive non-native animals at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Haleakala National Park, and Kalaupapa National Historical Park.

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

Question 4: I know that NPS relies on each park to put forward deferred maintenance projects to be considered for funding. What is the process for Park Superintendents to submit projects for Legacy Restoration Funding? Do they submit their proposals at the same time they submit projects to be considered for line item construction funds from appropriations, or is it separate?

Do the smaller parks have staffing and resources to compete for Legacy Restoration Funding? Do you feel that all NPS superintendents are clear on the process for project selection and how they can get their projects in the pipeline for consideration?

Response: To select deferred maintenance and repair (DM&R) projects park superintendents and their teams first identify condition deficiencies in their assets and develop projects to address those deficiencies. NPS regional resources support park superintendents in identifying the highest priority needs to operate and maintain assets. Those projects are then reviewed and prioritized across appropriate funding sources by subject matter experts and the regional investment review board.

Projects are then typically submitted through an annual NPS-wide comprehensive call to the NPS bureau investment review board for consideration of LRF funding. LRF funding is a good fit for projects that primarily address deferred maintenance, but where deferred maintenance is a smaller component of the overall project, the NPS utilizes other funding streams. Initially, due to the timing of enactment of the Great American Outdoors Act, formulation efforts were completed off-cycle from the typical budget formulation process, but timelines are expected to standardize in the later years of the program.

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

Questions from Chairman King

Question 1: When Congress was considering the Great American Outdoors Act, members were able to see extensive project lists representing the diversity of assets in need of repairs. This included specific projects to repair trails, docks, visitor centers, historic buildings, and much more. The National Park Service deferred maintenance website used to publish park by park totals of deferred maintenance as well as a national total, but this information is no longer visible publicly. *Do NPS, BLM, and FWS plan to publicly share information about site-level deferred maintenance needs (i.e., projects identified, projects funded, estimated backlog addressed by project, site-level backlog, etc.) and total deferred maintenance backlog? If not, what are the factors limiting agency transparency about site-level needs and the full extent of deferred maintenance?*

Response: The Department's GAOA LRF project webpage, <https://doi.gov/gaoa/projects>, provides information on the Department's deferred maintenance and repair (DM&R) projects for the NPS, BLM and FWS, including project data sheets for each fiscal year. This information includes a description of the project work, the estimated cost, and the amount of deferred maintenance being addressed by the project.

Additionally, the bureaus have developed webpages with information specific to each bureau. The BLM GAOA webpage is located at <https://www.blm.gov/gaoa>. The NPS infrastructure webpage, with information including park level infrastructure data sheets, is located at <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/infrastructure/identifying-reporting-deferred-maintenance.htm#states>. And, the FWS provides its yearly deferred maintenance project lists to the FWS's acquisitions community for posting to public websites for notice of upcoming business opportunities. The Department is committed to transparency and to providing additional DM&R information in the future.

Question 2: If annual appropriations do not keep up with the cost of recurring maintenance needs, the deferred maintenance backlog will continue to grow. *What are the total annual maintenance needs of NPS, BLM, and FWS, and how do those compare to total annual maintenance appropriations? How much additional deferred maintenance is being generated annually at NPS, BLM, FWS because of insufficient annual maintenance appropriations?*

Response: The Department maintains a vast infrastructure portfolio, including roads, buildings, utility systems, and other structures and facilities, across its land managing bureaus. This asset portfolio includes both historic and non-historic properties many of which have unique upkeep requirements not comparable to maintenance required for more standard assets. There are many factors impacting our ability to get ahead of the maintenance lifecycle, including investments early in the asset lifecycle and the increasing cost of construction and materials.

In 2022, the GAOA LRF-funded bureaus received approximately \$1.8 billion of discretionary funding for their asset management programs in addition to the \$1.6 billion appropriated under GAOA. In addition to these funds, bureaus use a mix of other permanent appropriations, including fees collected under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, and Title 23 funds for transportation assets, reauthorized

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

most recently by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The FY 2023 President's budget requests \$2.2 billion for discretionary-funded activities, a 19% increase.

As the Department implements its aggressive deferred maintenance effort, the Department is addressing overall asset management to improve portfolio management across the agency. To help slow the growth of the maintenance backlog and keep assets in good condition, the Department is taking steps to apply a lifecycle approach to manage its assets. This includes focusing efforts on preventative and recurring maintenance and selectively targeting assets for modernization and renewal investments. This approach will help ensure the highest priority asset management needs – preventive maintenance, repair, modernization, renewal, and even divesture – are targeted. We look forward to working with Congress to ensure the gains achieved by these investments are sustained.

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

Questions from Senator Lankford

Question 1: While I have grave concerns about the continued push to expand the federal land base, I believe it is long overdue that we put some focus on working down the maintenance backlog on our existing properties.

- 1. Assistant Secretary Estenoz, with the new maintenance funding available to Interior, how much of the backlog will the agency be able to reduce over the next 5 years?**
- 2. What would it take to reduce this backlog by 50% over the next 10 years?**
- 3. Is Interior utilizing any other resources, such as private partnerships, to address the backlog?**

Response to 1-3: In the 18 months since establishment of the Legacy Restoration Fund, the Department has programed more than \$4.8 billion of funding (for FY 2021-23) for high priority deferred maintenance projects, spanning all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. These projects are selected to maximize the reduction of bureau maintenance and repair backlogs. Given the volatility of the construction market, project cost estimates for project work are difficult to establish, as is an estimate of the total reduction that will be achieved over the term of the Legacy Restoration Fund. Similarly, forecasting the level of investment needed to reduce the Department's maintenance backlog by 50% over the next ten years is challenging. The Department is committed to address the backlog using the Legacy Restoration Fund and other resources, and is focused on leveraging infrastructure investments in a variety of ways, including, among others, leveraging park partnerships, expanding leasing opportunities, and utilizing complimentary funding streams.

Question 2: Sites like Yosemite, Yellowstone, and the Grand Canyon truly are our nation's crown jewels. But we need to be realistic about what it takes to maintain these resources, and what it will take to maintain new acquisitions.

- 1. In evaluating new acquisitions, does Interior consider deferred maintenance needs on the parcels?**
 - o If not, do you believe this is something Interior and Congress should consider prior to acquisition?**
- 2. Does it present financial challenges to Interior if the agency acquires properties that have existing deferred maintenance needs?**

Response to 1 and 2: Before the NPS, or any Department bureau, acquires new lands, it considers the totality of the circumstances related to the specific property in question. The cost or savings presented by the estimated operations, administration, and maintenance of a property are reviewed and analyzed. Other factors considered may include whether the property is part of a new or an existing park, the budget and

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

other available fund sources for that park, the historical or other significance of the property, whether the property contributes to the mission or operational capability of the park, and whether the facility can be determined to be eligible for divestiture. In any case, there is a cost associated with the divestiture, alteration, or maintenance of facilities acquired but that cost can vary greatly depending upon the purpose and facility investment plan identified.

Question 3: At various points throughout the past few decades, LWCF dollars have been provided for purposes other than acquisition. Assistant Secretary Estenoz, do you think we should consider using some of the nearly \$1b annually on other purposes like maintenance, should a serious deferred maintenance need arise?

Response: The Department is currently focused on effectively expending the \$3.2 billion of new funding provided by the Great American Outdoors Act Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF) in fiscal years 2021 and 2022, and believes the LRF will make significant progress in retiring large amounts of deferred maintenance and improving the condition of some of our nation's most treasured assets. It is critically important that we take care of the assets and resources managed by the bureaus.

At the same time, we must protect our Nation's lands and waters and ensure that Americans have access to the lands. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was established by Congress in 1964 to safeguard our natural areas, water resources and cultural heritage and to provide recreation opportunities to all Americans. The LWCF ensures that we are expanding public access to federal lands and supporting State and locally-led recreation and conservation initiatives.

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

Question from Senator Kelly

Question: Please provide a status update and timeline for extending boat ramps at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

Response: The NPS is in the design phase for an estimated \$30 million worth of investments to relocate marina utilities at Bullfrog and the well at Wahweap to support visitor services, funded by the recent disaster supplemental appropriation. This builds on other recently completed work to permanently extend boat ramps at Wahweap and temporarily extend a ramp at Bullfrog, using a mix of other funding sources at a cost of approximately \$5 million.

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

Questions from Senator Hickenlooper

Question 1: Are the USFS and BLM seeing a growing reluctance from private landowners to sell property to the federal government because of the developing perception that federal appraisals are coming in significantly below what land can be sold for on the open market?

Response: The BLM is not aware of any landowners choosing not to sell their property to the BLM due to a perception that federal appraisals may be significantly lower than what their property could be appraised for on the open market. The BLM works closely with willing sellers and third parties throughout the acquisition process and submits appraisal requests through the Department's Appraisal and Valuation Services Office. Appraisals completed for federal acquisitions follow specific requirements to ensure that just compensation for the federal acquisition of a property is offered to a landowner in accordance with federal law.

Question 2: I have heard that despite permanent and full funding for LWCF, the number of proposed projects on the federal side of the program still outpace the amount of money for each year. What are the criteria you use to prioritize projects and how are you working with the appropriations committee on settling on priorities if not all projects can be funded each year?

Response: The Department's federal land acquisition project lists are developed by each bureau, each using its own process for selection based on the bureau's specific management needs and statutory requirements, and then are reviewed and approved by the Department. Across the Department, certain project selection criteria are similar, including prioritizing land acquisitions that present a time-sensitive or unique acquisition opportunity, involve a willing seller, include regional and local support, promote recreation access, preserve threatened resources, and support mission requirements. Additionally, in accordance with the Administration's priorities, consideration is given to projects which benefit underserved or at-risk communities and strengthen the resilience of resources to climate change impacts.

Question 3: Since 1965, 92 out of 41,999 LWCF grants were awarded to tribal nations. Given that collaboration with Native Tribes is a key priority for the Biden Administration, how has the administration been working to promote LWCF opportunities to Tribal communities and how can the Secretary better use her discretion to ensure that LWCF funds are available and equitably distributed to Tribal communities?

Response: In 2021, the Department held two listening sessions with Tribes to understand their interest in and issues with LWCF programs, including State conservation grants. A variety of structural issues were raised about the LWCF State and Local Assistance Program. Some of these issues would require legislative action to resolve, such as the need to apply through the states and cost-sharing requirements. The Department is working to expand the NPS' operational capacity for LWCF programs through planned increases in staffing, which will allow for greater levels of technical assistance and resources to review and process new grant applications. This effort is ongoing.

Questions for the Record
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks
Hearing on *Implementation of the Great American Outdoors Act*
February 9, 2022

Question 4: I'm concerned about reports of understaffing in key offices at DOI that would be in charge of successfully and equitably distributing funds for both LWCF and the Parks Maintenance backlog. Do you have sufficient staff to ensure the success of these programs?

Response: Ensuring appropriate staffing throughout the Department to meet our mission goals is a critical priority for Secretary Haaland. Within the federal government, employee hiring is subject to a number of federal rules and regulations that, coupled with a strong employment market in the private sector, present challenges in the hiring of qualified employees. We are committed to working with Congress as we focus important resources on the dedicated career staff at the Department.

Question 5: The National Wildlife Refuge System is the only system of federal lands dedicated specifically to the conservation of wildlife and habitat. There are eight National Wildlife Refuges in Colorado alone. However, the National Wildlife Refuge System only receives 5 percent of the funding for deferred maintenance projects under the Great American Outdoors Act. Considering the Refuge System has a deferred maintenance backlog over \$1 billion, does the allocation provided under the GAOA allow the Fish and Wildlife Service to reduce the backlog in deferred maintenance? Has the Fish and Wildlife Service had to limit any of its visitor services programs due to an inability to address deferred maintenance (e.g., closing roads or visitor centers)?

Response: Periodically, the FWS has had to close bridges, roads, docks, and other assets due to emergent safety issues resulting from the postponement of preventative maintenance activities. Safety-related issues are top priorities for the FWS to mitigate, and the FWS dedicates funding to resolve the public safety issues that may arise. The Legacy Restoration Fund, authorized by the Great American Outdoors Act, represents a tremendous surge in capacity to slow the growth of the maintenance backlog for constructed assets of the FWS within the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Question 6: Underserved communities face numerous barriers to accessing public lands. LWCF state-side programs like the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Program offer support to create and revitalize local parks in neighborhoods that lack green space and outdoor recreation opportunities. Do you believe that codifying the ORLP program and offering more eligibility guidance through bills like the Outdoors for All Act would further bolster GAOA's impact?

Response: Consistent with the Administration's policies, the Department supports the development of outdoor recreation areas in underserved and disadvantaged areas lacking such resources, and supports the goal of providing express statutory authority for the important ORLP program. A consistent cycle of grant opportunities would encourage communities to invest the time and effort to participate. We continue to work with Congress to ensure legislation aligns with the current, successful ORLP program.

Attachment Sen. Barrasso Q 13 SCORP Status

State	Time period	Expires	Approved Date	Status Comments
Alabama	2013-2018	2/28/20	5/28/14	Extended; updated plan has been submitted to NPS for review
Alaska	2016-2021	12/31/21	1/20/17	New plan in development; requested 1 year extension
American Samoa	2020-2024	12/31/24	10/9/19	
Arizona	2018-2022	12/31/22	12/29/17	
Arkansas	2019-2023	12/31/23	12/20/18	
California	2015-2020	12/31/20	7/7/15	Extended; updated plan has been submitted to NPS for review
Colorado	2019-2023	12/31/23	3/4/19	
Connecticut	2017-2022	12/31/22	1/11/18	
Delaware	2018-2023	9/30/23	3/6/19	
District of Columbia	2014-2019	3/30/20	10/31/14	Extended; updated plan has been submitted to NPS for review
Florida	2019-2023	7/30/23	9/6/19	
Georgia	2017-2021	11/30/21	12/8/16	Updated plan has been submitted to NPS for review
Guam	2020-2024	12/31/24	12/16/19	
Hawaii	2015-2020	8/31/21	8/24/15	Extended; updated plan has been submitted to NPS for review
Idaho	2018-2022	12/31/22	8/7/18	
Illinois	2015-2019	12/31/20	5/7/15	Extended; updated plan has been submitted to NPS for review
Indiana	2021-2025	12/31/25	2/19/20	
Iowa	2018-2023	12/31/23	2/19/19	
Kansas	2015-2020	12/31/20	5/7/15	Extended; updated plan has been submitted to NPS for review
Kentucky	2020-2024	10/31/24	12/3/19	
Louisiana	2014-2019	11/30/20	11/20/14	Extended; updated plan has been submitted to NPS for review
Maine	2020-2024	9/30/24	3/17/20	
Maryland	2019-2023	3/31/23	6/13/19	
Massachusetts	2017-2022	12/31/22	1/11/17	
Michigan	2018-2022	12/31/22	12/15/17	
Minnesota	2020-2024	12/31/24	2/4/20	
Mississippi	2019-2024	8/31/24	9/6/19	
Missouri	2018-2022	12/31/23	3/26/19	
Montana	2020-2024	12/31/24	12/18/19	
Nebraska	2016-2020	12/31/20	1/14/16	Lapsed. Updated plan has been submitted to NPS for review
Nevada	2016-2021	12/31/21	12/15/16	New plan in development; requested 6 month extension
New Hampshire	2019-2023	12/31/23	11/14/18	
New Jersey	2018-2022	12/31/22	3/6/19	
New Mexico	2016-2020	12/31/21	2/15/16	Extended; updated plan has been submitted to NPS for review
New York	2020-2024	9/30/24	10/8/19	
North Carolina	2020-2025	3/31/25	9/9/20	
North Dakota	2018-2022	12/31/22	5/22/18	
N. Mariana Islands	2005-2009			Lapsed. New plan has been submitted to NPS for review
Ohio	2018-2023	12/31/23	12/12/18	
Oklahoma	2018-2022	12/31/22	12/29/17	
Oregon	2019-2023	4/30/24	4/23/19	
Pennsylvania	2020-2024	6/30/24	7/27/20	
Puerto Rico	2014-2019	7/31/20	7/30/14	Extended then lapsed. New plan has been submitted to NPS for review
Rhode Island	2019-2024	9/30/24	11/5/19	
South Carolina	2019-2024	7/31/24	8/28/19	
South Dakota	2018-2022	12/31/22	1/3/18	
Tennessee	2015-2020	12/31/20	5/11/16	Lapsed. New plan in development

Attachment Sen. Barrasso Q 13 SCORP Status

State	Time period	Expires	Approved Date	Status Comments
Texas	2018-2022	12/31/22	1/16/18	New plan in development; requested 1 year extension
Utah	2019-2023	12/31/23	12/12/18	
Vermont	2019-2023	9/30/23	3/17/20	
Virgin Islands	2013-2018	4/30/19	4/16/14	Lapsed. Plan status unknown
Virginia	2019-2023	12/31/23	2/20/19	
Washington	2018-2022	12/31/22	11/7/17	
West Virginia	2015-2020	4/30/21	8/13/15	Extended; updated plan has been submitted to NPS for review
Wisconsin	2019-2023	12/31/23	6/7/19	
Wyoming	2019-2023	12/31/23	2/11/19	



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

JUN 16 2022

The Honorable Angus King, Jr.
Chairman, Subcommittee on National Parks
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Enclosed are responses prepared by the National Park Service to questions for the record received by Mr. Michael Reynolds following his appearance before your Subcommittee at the July 28, 2021, hearing on *The Impacts of Overcrowding in Our National Parks on Park Resources and Visitor Experiences, and to Consider Strategic Approaches to Visitor Use Management*. We apologize for the delay in our response.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to you on these matters.

Sincerely,

Christopher P. Salotti
Legislative Counsel
Office of Congressional and
Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Steve Daines
Ranking Member

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks**

**July 28, 2021 Hearing: *The Impacts of Overcrowding in Our National Parks on Park Resources and Visitor Experiences, and to Consider Strategic Approaches to Visitor Use Management*
Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Michael T. Reynolds**

Questions from Committee Ranking Member Barrasso

Question 1: How can initiatives like the Greater Zion Initiative in Utah be replicated at other NPS units?

Response: The National Park Service (NPS) is committed to engaging local, regional and national communities, partners, and other stakeholders as the NPS addresses the complex issues of crowding and congestion. Several NPS units are currently coordinating with a variety of partners such as the Federal Transit Administration, State Departments of Transportation, State Offices of Tourism, and friends groups to develop projects that promote region-wide tourism opportunities to better accommodate visitors while addressing congestion issues. The NPS is engaging in multiple integrated transportation initiatives and collaborating with partners to meet shared needs and to develop opportunities to improve access to public lands. Similar to the Greater Zion Initiative, these efforts help coordinate and promote state and local tourism information about regional tourism opportunities to help spread visitation and ease congestion.

Question 2: What can be done to ensure local citizens in gateway communities can have access to parks that are using reservation systems?

Response: The NPS wants every visitor, including those who live in the surrounding community, to have a great park experience. The agency recognizes that every person's relationship with their national parks is unique and special. For local and regional residents of any national park, this often translates to an immense amount of pride in and advocacy for the national parks that they frequently visit. In park units that are highly congested, visitors often experience long lines to get in to the park, may be faced with excessive traffic within the park, may be unable to find parking, and can experience overcrowded trails. A timed entry permit reservation system can benefit all visitors, including local residents, as it can provide visitors with more certainty and an overall better experience.

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks

July 28, 2021 Hearing: *The Impacts of Overcrowding in Our National Parks on Park Resources and Visitor Experiences, and to Consider Strategic Approaches to Visitor Use Management*

Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Michael T. Reynolds

Questions from Ranking Member Daines

Question 1: It is my understanding that the hiring process at the Park Service can take months and that it is hard for parks to quickly adapt and hire employees to address increased visitation or other problems that come up. It is also my understanding that the Park Service is currently utilizing emergency hiring authority but that program will soon end, leaving our parks in a position where they have to wait months to hire qualified staff. How can the Administration and Congress work together to speed up the hiring process?

Response: The NPS has taken multiple steps to address lagging hiring timelines. For instance, the NPS has standardized frequently used position descriptions across the NPS, which has resulted in the posting of open continuous vacancies and the establishing of standing registers from which multiple selections may be made at once. These new protocols have allowed the NPS to be able to submit multiple hires in record time, with over 6,000 vacancies filled in the third quarter of fiscal year 2021 alone.

Question 2: Employee retention, employee housing, and funding for new staff also contributes to staff shortages. What do you think needs to be done to ensure the Park Service can continue to hire and retain the best talent?

Response: NPS employees are expected to live in private market housing unless they perform duties that make living in the park required or when affordable housing in the community is unaffordable or unavailable. Recently, the housing market in many gateway communities has made housing unavailable or unaffordable for NPS employees, leading to challenges with recruitment. The NPS is exploring alternative ways to create additional housing.

The NPS has published new policies regulating the granting of, among others, Recruitment, Retention and Relocation Incentives (3Rs) and Superior Qualifications to attract top talent and retain employees. The NPS has granted incentives for permanent staff and continues to make retention incentives part of its hiring protocols for Federal Employees as needed. It is important to note, however, that 46.1% of the attrition within the NPS over the last 3 years has come from retirements. A third of the NPS workforce is eligible to retire within the next five years.

Question 3: Please provide for the Subcommittee an analysis of the visitation numbers at the current top 20 most visited park units since 1980 compared to the employment levels each year at the same park units.

Response: The NPS employment numbers date from 2012 when universal reporting codes were fully implemented.

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks

July 28, 2021 Hearing: *The Impacts of Overcrowding in Our National Parks on Park Resources and Visitor Experiences, and to Consider Strategic Approaches to Visitor Use Management*

Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Michael T. Reynolds

Park	Rank	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Blue Ridge PKWY	1	15,205,059	12,877,368	13,941,749	15,054,603	15,175,578	16,093,765	14,690,418	14,976,085	14,099,485
# of Staff		298	240	237	237	243	215	223	221	206
Golden Gate NRA	2	14,540,338	14,289,121	15,004,420	14,888,537	15,638,777	14,981,897	15,223,697	15,002,227	12,400,045
# of Staff		243	251	253	248	255	310	291	281	271
Great Smoky Mountains NP	3	9,685,829	9,354,695	10,099,276	10,712,674	11,312,786	11,338,893	11,421,200	12,547,743	12,095,720
# of Staff		385	327	336	346	328	326	318	336	338
Gateway NRA	4	5,043,863	6,191,246	6,021,713	6,392,565	8,651,770	9,190,610	9,243,305	9,405,622	8,404,728
# of Staff		569	546	567	527	538	492	487	500	457
Lake Mead NRA	5	6,285,439	6,344,714	6,942,873	7,298,465	7,175,891	7,882,339	7,578,958	7,499,049	8,016,510
# of Staff		319	280	233	248	246	240	251	227	227
George Washington MEM PKWY	6	7,425,577	7,360,392	7,472,150	7,286,463	10,323,339	7,562,793	7,288,623	7,487,265	6,237,361
# of Staff		95	87	97	111	94	98	80	81	92
Natchez Trace PKWY	7	5,560,668	6,012,740	5,846,474	5,785,812	5,891,315	6,326,062	6,362,439	6,296,041	6,124,808
# of Staff		155	139	141	126	136	132	125	121	110
Chesapeake & Ohio Canal NHP	8	4,712,377	4,941,367	5,066,219	4,798,312	4,813,078	4,859,573	4,438,818	5,116,787	4,888,436
# of Staff		131	112	95	85	83	87	76	71	70
Cape Cod NS	9	4,441,290	4,501,898	4,426,750	4,503,220	4,692,796	4,125,418	3,926,462	4,096,104	4,083,505
# of Staff		223	198	210	189	188	170	160	158	139
Gulf Islands NS	11	4,973,462	4,837,965	4,455,240	3,976,883	4,771,309	3,952,941	4,229,968	5,600,240	4,012,129
# of Staff		125	103	88	93	88	81	70	79	75
Yellowstone NP	12	3,447,729	3,188,030	3,513,484	4,097,710	4,257,177	4,116,524	4,115,000	4,020,288	3,806,306
# of Staff		833	769	768	772	797	779	752	739	657
Zion NP	13	2,973,607	2,807,387	3,189,696	3,648,846	4,295,127	4,504,812	4,320,033	4,488,268	3,591,254
# of Staff		247	228	229	211	216	215	199	197	211
Rocky Mountain NP	14	3,229,617	2,991,141	3,434,751	4,155,916	4,517,585	4,437,215	4,590,493	4,670,053	3,305,199
# of Staff		436	413	411	404	411	388	386	374	358
Grand Teton NP	15	2,705,256	2,688,794	2,791,392	3,149,921	3,270,076	3,317,000	3,491,151	3,405,614	3,289,638
# of Staff		354	322	346	355	377	381	353	329	294
Chattahoochee River NRA	16	3,168,137	3,039,892	3,119,160	3,173,204	2,736,385	2,768,499	2,873,866	3,393,133	3,066,877
# of Staff		56	48	41	34	35	32	31	32	32
Lincoln Memorial	17	6,191,361	6,546,518	7,139,072	7,941,771	7,915,934	7,956,117	7,804,683	7,808,182	2,980,075
# of Staff		324	320	314	310	301	271	233	228	219
Colorado NM	18	454,510	409,351	416,862	588,006	391,075	375,035	375,467	397,032	435,625
# of Staff		49	42	44	39	45	44	48	45	47
Grand Canyon NP	19	4,421,352	4,564,840	4,756,771	5,520,736	5,969,811	6,254,238	6,380,495	5,974,411	2,897,098
# of Staff		614	581	576	491	499	437	423	410	389
Cuyahoga Valley NP	20	2,299,722	2,103,010	2,189,849	2,284,612	2,423,390	2,226,879	2,096,053	2,237,997	2,755,628
# of Staff		176	146	146	157	158	158	141	134	131
Sum of Recreation Visits		106,770,649	105,055,475	109,832,887	115,263,082	124,228,079	122,275,308	120,455,635	124,426,570	106,494,619

Question 4: It was noted during the hearing that from 2011-2019, staff capacity decreased by 16%. Is that number accurate and what factors account for this decrease?

Response: Yes, between FY 11 and FY 19, the total number of NPS full time employees decreased by approximately 3,500 or 16%. This drop can be attributed to factors such as rising fixed costs of employee salary and benefits, loss of purchasing power because of inflation, and an increase in new units. For example, an average GS-09 interpretation ranger's average salary and benefits cost in 2011 was

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks

July 28, 2021 Hearing: *The Impacts of Overcrowding in Our National Parks on Park Resources and Visitor Experiences, and to Consider Strategic Approaches to Visitor Use Management*

Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Michael T. Reynolds

approximately \$63,000, versus \$77,000 in 2021. Additionally, during this period the National Park System has grown to include new units, and existing units have seen responsibilities grow through increasing lands and infrastructure and unprecedented visitation.

Question 5: It was discussed in the hearing that the Park Service currently has a number of pilot programs dealing with park visitation. This includes ticketed entry, how to integrate technology into services, and how to spread park traffic, among other things. Can you provide a list of pilot programs currently happening at park units that look to address visitation and crowding?

Response: There are several pilot programs the NPS is employing to come up with ways to address visitation and crowding.

Timed Entry - There are currently several National Park units using a timed-entry system. In some cases, this system helps manage visitation through timed access to the entire park, in other cases, the system applies only to certain locations or attractions within the park that may experience congestion. In the summer and fall of 2020, four park units (Rocky Mountain National Park, Zion National Park, Yosemite National Park, and Dinosaur National Monument) implemented temporary managed access systems and one park unit (Acadia National Park) implemented a managed access pilot. In summer 2021, the pilots at Rocky Mountain and Yosemite were still in place, and Glacier National Park started a pilot. In 2021, Acadia transitioned to a permanent timed-entry reservation system for Cadillac Summit. Other similar permanent systems are in place at Muir Woods and Haleakala National Park.

- **Acadia National Park** – currently operating a timed entry at Cadillac Mountain to control congestion during peak times throughout the day, particularly at Daytime, Sunrise, Sunset. Tickets are released 90 days in advance and then 2 days in advance of the start date.
- **Glacier National Park** – is using a day-use ticketed entry system to manage access on the popular Going-to-the-Sun Road. Tickets are valid 7 days and are only valid and required from the hours of 6 am to 5 pm Mountain Time. Tickets can be purchased either 60 days in advance, or 2 days in advance of the start date. Visitors can enter the park before and after the time entry period without a ticket.
- **Yosemite National Park** – currently using a day-use ticketed entry system that allows visitors to enter Yosemite Valley. The tickets are valid for entry for three consecutive days. Tickets are required to enter Yosemite at any point throughout the day.
 - Day-use reservations are released April 21 for arrivals May 21 through June 30. After that release, entire months' worth of tickets are released in one-week intervals. Additional tickets are released on a rolling basis seven days in advance of arrival.
- **Rocky Mountain National Park** – currently using timed entry for different sections of the park. Visitors can enter the park before and after the timed entry period without a ticket. Tickets are released 90 days in advance and then 1 day in advance of the start date.
- **Great Smoky Mountains National Park** – conducted a pilot program for the month of September in 2021.

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks

July 28, 2021 Hearing: *The Impacts of Overcrowding in Our National Parks on Park Resources and Visitor Experiences, and to Consider Strategic Approaches to Visitor Use Management*

Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Michael T. Reynolds

NPS Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) - ATS connect communities to parks and help manage congestion. Over the past 10 years, the NPS has piloted several ATS in parks such as Joshua Tree, Delaware Water Gap, and Sequoia Kings Canyon. These programs make use of multiple use paths, bike share, and other transportation services into the park from the surrounding communities either year-round or during peak visitation. The NPS is also beginning to consider transit pilots at several other parks.

NPS Congestion Management Program - This program provides support to improve how NPS units manage congestion issues such as entrance station lines, crowding parking areas, and traffic circulation. The program offers a toolkit that features 59 tools and a process to identify congestion problems and mitigate them. Assessments are also available to provide short-term technical support to quickly assist parks with moderate levels of congestion. Parks across the service have implemented congestion mitigation strategies such as parking attendants at Yellowstone's Midway Geyser Basin, active metering of vehicles at the entrance station at Arches, variable message boards to manage large vehicle access at Montezuma Castle, and car free days at Great Smokies' Cades Cove.

Digital Payments (Activity passes, Scan & Pay) - Activity passes allow visitors to purchase passes for specific activities at a location, reducing the need for in-person transactions and often increasing compliance for securing a pass in advance of a visit. The Scan & Pay feature offers visitors the ability to secure and pay for a first-come, first-served campsite once they arrive to their destination, thus eliminating on-site cash payments through a kiosk or attendant.

Lotteries (permits, tickets, camping) – For locations and activities that offer recreation opportunities that are in extremely high demand for limited visitors, lotteries offer a fair and equitable method for awarding permits, tickets or even campsites.

NPS Widget – Recreation.gov worked with the National Park Service to integrate a widget onto NPS.gov pages that allows visitors to reserve campsites while remaining within the NPS.gov site. The widget employs the Recreation.gov reservation workflow, such that transactions are secure, and visitors receive confirmation and updates about their reservations from the Recreation.gov system.

Recommendation Engine – This search engine provides users with alternative locations and sites when their desired selections are already reserved.

Availability Bot at the Call Center – This call center bot gives people availability quickly over the phone without having to wait for an agent.

Question 6: What current efforts or programs are ongoing at the Park Service related to increasing visibility and visitation to smaller or less visited park units?

Response: A number of initiatives have been implemented to help park visitors thoughtfully plan their visits to NPS units based on their desired experiences and activities, including sharing information via park websites, Rec.gov, and the NPS App, on the specific opportunities at each unit, along with

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks**

July 28, 2021 Hearing: *The Impacts of Overcrowding in Our National Parks on Park Resources and Visitor Experiences, and to Consider Strategic Approaches to Visitor Use Management*
Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Michael T. Reynolds

recreational and educational opportunities available at nearby public lands. Further, the agency is working on ways to communicate about sites that may be not as well-known, through campaigns such as Find Your Park, Every Kid in a Park, and the National Scenic Byways Program.

The NPS is also developing new tourism strategy tools that can help staff conduct research, better understand the interests and motivations of potential visitor segments, offer innovative visitor experiences, and work with partners to raise awareness among targeted audiences. Additionally, the agency works with the tourism and recreation industries in a variety of ways to coordinate messaging and promotion, and to highlight less-visited sites.

The NPS has a large presence on social media that includes hundreds of park-specific accounts as well as the agency's "parent" accounts. Park staff continuously use these platforms to cross-promote and share content so that parks with a smaller audience of followers (and that may be less-visited) get exposure to a larger audience that is actively interested in parks. The agency also leverages public relations and media coverage to promote lesser-visited sites, generating a large volume of media coverage that can influence trip-planning and decision-making. We also work continuously with a variety of partners such as the National Park Foundation, cooperating associations, friends' groups, and community partners to amplify information about lesser-visited sites.

Question 7: We heard that reservations can be made 48 hours in advance in some locations that require ticketed entry, but these reservations often sell out in seconds. How does this impact people who cannot obtain a reservation, especially if their visit was centered on going to a National Park?

Response: For most private vehicle reservation systems, the permits are broken up into two batches. The first batch is available well in advance of the visit (usually multiple months) for those visitors who prefer to get their reservations as a part of their larger trip planning along with hotel and other travel reservations. A second batch of permits is then made available for short-term purchase (week of, 48 hours in advance, or day of depending on the park). Leftover advance reservations and returned reservations are typically added to the short-term reservation pool.

In addition, enhancements to Rec.gov will also provide added recommendation and map features to provide reasonable alternatives to visitors. For example, the website and app will provide suggestions for other federal lands that do have availability within a reasonable driving distance.

While permits for the highest demand locations and times do tend to go quickly, in almost all units, these proactive systems allow the parks to accommodate more visitors safely and sustainably than they could otherwise accommodate with other types of strategies (e.g., gate closures, social media messages).

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks

July 28, 2021 Hearing: *The Impacts of Overcrowding in Our National Parks on Park Resources and Visitor Experiences, and to Consider Strategic Approaches to Visitor Use Management*

Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Michael T. Reynolds

Question 8: How do ticketing systems impact revenue at the specific park and in surrounding gateway communities?

Response: At this time, it is difficult to pinpoint the specific revenue impact from a ticketing system. Many issues, including surges in visitation due to Covid-19 and impacts from natural disasters such as fires and storms, contribute to an impact on revenue at various park areas.

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks

July 28, 2021 Hearing: *The Impacts of Overcrowding in Our National Parks on Park Resources and Visitor Experiences, and to Consider Strategic Approaches to Visitor Use Management*

Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Michael T. Reynolds

Questions from Senator Murkowski

Question 1: Brooks Camp in Katmai National Park attracts thousands of visitors each year to view brown bears catching salmon along the Brooks River. Katmai visitation has increased over the years, resulting in overcrowding to the point that the park is considering building new viewing platforms up at the falls. Visitors are limited the amount of time they are able to view on the platform due to overcrowding. How does NPS plan to address overcrowding in remote parks such as in Katmai, where visitation has complex logistics – such as arrival by floatplane? Given the sheer size of Katmai, does it make more sense to encourage visitation elsewhere in the park, rather than funneling thousands of people to one trail and viewing platform?

Response: In the Alaska Region, the NPS understands that the need for visitor use management regarding bears is increasing. The Katmai National Park's strategy for accommodating continued growth involves opportunities beyond the Brooks Camp area and includes working with surrounding communities to develop other visitor opportunities. Katmai National Park recently completed a “pre-NEPA” analysis of issues associated with increased visitation, including a financial and economic market analysis of bear viewing along the coast.

Question 2: The use of private vehicle access on Denali Park Road through the road lottery is gaining in popularity. In addition, private guiding companies are competing for limited permits to bring visitors into the Park, in lieu of the bus concessions. How do we address equity between the bus, private vehicle access through the road lottery, and private guiding businesses wishing to conduct tours along the Denali National Park Road?

Response: Denali National Park and Preserve (Denali) has provided trips on the 92-mile Park Road via a bus system since 1972. The bus system allows for more visitors (52 per vehicle), an interpretive experience from a knowledgeable driver, and a safe way to travel the narrow gravel road. The 2012 Denali Park Road Vehicle Management Plan used adaptive management principles to maximize the number of visitors who could experience the Denali Park Road while minimizing the known negative effects of traffic on wildlife and resources.

During the pandemic season of 2020, Denali faced a summer of few out-of-state travelers and increased in-state interest in visiting the park. To accommodate this unusual visitation, Denali opened the road to private guiding companies taking vehicle tours into the park. Five companies applied for permission, but only four operated. In 2021, more normal operations resumed (estimating 45% of a "normal" year), and the bus system was once again able to meet demand.

Denali's fall Road Lottery, an event where private vehicles can drive the park road after the bus system stops running in September, has remained consistently popular.

Recent park planning efforts have addressed growing visitation in the shoulder seasons (March-May) and the increase in winter visitors. The 2020 Winter and Shoulder Season Plan considered the difference in

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks

July 28, 2021 Hearing: *The Impacts of Overcrowding in Our National Parks on Park Resources and Visitor Experiences, and to Consider Strategic Approaches to Visitor Use Management*

Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Michael T. Reynolds

visitor needs and expectations during the spring and early summer season which is favored by Alaskans and independent travelers. It also approved new business offerings for guided tours during the winter and spring season. Independent visitors can access the first 15 miles of the Park Road throughout the year and the first 30 miles, when passable, until mid-May.

NPS's decisions regarding summer vehicles in Denali are guided by public input and planning documents in the Park's Vehicle Management Plan. The plan undergoes a periodic review and update of its standards, and alternatives to the current mix of bus, private vehicle via lottery, and private guides can be evaluated at that time.

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks

July 28, 2021 Hearing: *The Impacts of Overcrowding in Our National Parks on Park Resources and Visitor Experiences, and to Consider Strategic Approaches to Visitor Use Management*

Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Michael T. Reynolds

Question from Senator Hoeven

Question: The Great American Outdoors Act provides the National Park Service with just over \$1.3 billion annually for 5 years to address its deferred maintenance backlog. Along with several members on this subcommittee, I cosponsored and helped pass the Restore Our Parks Act out of the Energy & Natural Resources Committee in both the 115th Congress and 116th Congress and was pleased to see it signed into law last year. How important it is to have a dedicated, stable source of funding to address maintenance needs at our national parks?

Response: The passage of this legislation has created an extraordinary opportunity for crucial investments in our nation's most meaningful landscapes. The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) funding provides the much-needed funding to repair and upgrade vital infrastructure and facilities that will enhance the visitor experience, protect resources now and in the future, and help enable increased access for all visitors. Many of the roads, trails, restrooms, water treatment systems, waste-water systems, and visitor facilities in national park units are aging and strained by a level of use they were not designed to support. In addition to the crucial GAOA funding for deferred park maintenance, NPS will need to continue to rely on its traditional funding sources to address scheduled maintenance, repairs, and long-term rehabilitation and/or replacement needs.

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks

July 28, 2021 Hearing: *The Impacts of Overcrowding in Our National Parks on Park Resources and Visitor Experiences, and to Consider Strategic Approaches to Visitor Use Management*

Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Michael T. Reynolds

Questions from Chairman King

Question 1: As we discuss ways to address overcrowding and traffic congestion in national parks, using technology to ensure that visitors have the latest, most up-to-the-minute information available could play a key role in helping alleviate crowding and ensuring that visitors have a better experience. For example, if a visitor knows that the crowds at Thunder Hole in Acadia are high, they can readjust their plans and instead head up Cadillac for an afternoon hike.

How is the National Park Service utilizing technology—including existing platforms such as the NPS app and recreation.gov, as well as emerging opportunities—to relay up-to-date crowd information to visitors? What ways do you envision being able to use these technologies to help make access to crowd information more readily available to visitors? Do you need additional support from Congress—either through new authorities or additional funding—to be able to implement the use of these new technologies?

Response: Comprehensive, reliable, and accessible traveler information plays an important role in enhancing recreational access to parks. Visitor satisfaction is strongly tied to expectations and disseminating traveler information in advance sets the stage for a satisfying visit. When the NPS designs visitor travel information (trip planning, wayfinding, and congestion info), our goal is to ensure that visitors have the right information at the right time to make an informed decision.

The NPS's Emerging Mobility and Digital/Web Services workgroups collaborate to integrate traveler information into the NPS app, website, and other outlets. Additionally, the NPS is identifying opportunities to pilot the inclusion of real time or predictive transportation condition information into NPS's digital products when it will influence visitor decision making. Additional research and development are needed so that the most efficient and effective tools are identified for determining funding, staffing, and data gaps needed to support the products. For "real time" and predictive traveler information to successfully be integrated into digital products, NPS staff will be needed to manage the supporting transportation data systems.

Question 2: The Park Service does a good job collecting data on visitation throughout the system. However, when we went looking for visitation on the Appalachian Trail, another park unit in Maine, we only had estimates on visitation from partners. The Park Service doesn't measure visitation on the Appalachian Trail—or any of the ten other National Scenic Trails. I understand that tracking visitation on a linear park is much more difficult.

Is this something that the Park Service has examined? What resources would you need to better collect visitation data on our scenic trails?

Response: The NPS is one of the three agencies (including the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management) that has federal national trail administration responsibilities for the congressionally designated 11 national scenic trail and 19 national historic trail components of the National Trails System

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks

July 28, 2021 Hearing: *The Impacts of Overcrowding in Our National Parks on Park Resources and Visitor Experiences, and to Consider Strategic Approaches to Visitor Use Management*

Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Michael T. Reynolds

spanning approximately 55,000 miles. The system is cooperatively managed by nonfederal and other federal partners who collaborate in the management of a complex network of trails, waterways, roads, and byways. These linear, collaboratively managed corridors often exceed thousands of miles, span multiple States, and pass through an array of land management entities and jurisdictions. This, combined with innumerable access and egress points, adds an overwhelming complexity to collecting and measuring valid and reliable visitation data for an entire trail or major segments of trails. Agencies and partners have been successful at counting trail use at a few discrete local locations or facilities that are frequently or heavily used. However, tracking and quantifying visitor use information over these large multijurisdictional landscapes is an extremely difficult challenge. Applying traditional visitor survey methods used in smaller areas with limited access points, like parks, would be cost-prohibitive and ineffective.

Some past exploratory studies have been performed by the NPS or through others along some of the more heavily used areas of individual national trails. In addition, the NPS, in coordination with other national trail administering agencies, has been exploring options to evaluate methods, including consideration of emerging data collection sources and technologies, and to identify the resources needed to accurately quantify visitation levels.

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks

July 28, 2021 Hearing: *The Impacts of Overcrowding in Our National Parks on Park Resources and Visitor Experiences, and to Consider Strategic Approaches to Visitor Use Management*

Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Michael T. Reynolds

Questions from Senator Kelly

Question 1: What is the National Park Service doing to rehabilitate or extend the boat ramps at southern Lake Powell in Glen Canyon National Recreation Area?

Response: The NPS FY 2022 budget request includes a \$17 million increase for Emergency and Unscheduled Projects funding, as one component of multiple and varied investments across the Service to better understand and address resource challenges on park lands stemming from climate change. This additional funding would support an array of critical projects that sustain or restore NPS operations during and after emergencies, critical system failures, and extreme environmental conditions. Specifically, this new funding will be prioritized to address the most critical needs, including water access issues at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area where extreme worsening of drought conditions has caused lake levels to drop below operating elevations much faster than anticipated. Assuming reduced lake level predictions are realized, a mix of funding will be needed in FY 2022 and in future fiscal years to address the needed infrastructure changes. Funding would support low-water facility modifications, including permanent and temporary extension of launch ramps, retrofits of a buoy tender vessel, and relocation and reconstruction of docks.

Question 2: How will the National Park Service be funding its solutions to the boat ramp issue at southern Lake Powell?

Response: Please see the response to question 1.

Question 3: What is the anticipated decrease in the water levels in Glen Canyon National Recreation Area due to the upcoming planned release of water from Lake Powell to Lake Mead?

Response: According to the most probable scenario modeled in the August 2021 24-Month Study, Reclamation anticipates that the water level in Lake Powell will continue to decrease through the fall and winter to a minimum of 3517.31 feet by the end of April 2022. With the current elevation at 3550.69 feet, this will be a decrease of approximately 33 feet. Around May 2022, Reclamation anticipates that Lake Powell water levels will begin to increase with the spring runoff.

Reclamation is currently working with the Upper Division States to complete planning efforts under the Drought Response Operating Agreement (DROA). Under this agreement, Colorado River Storage Project reservoirs above Lake Powell may make supplemental releases to protect critical lake levels at Lake Powell. The projections for future Lake Powell levels include 181,000 acre-feet of supplemental releases from upstream reservoirs to Lake Powell that are currently underway and will be completed by the end of calendar year 2021. Under the DROA, Reclamation will look at monthly release adjustments at Lake Powell first before considering additional releases from upstream facilities. Future action, if necessary, would occur in calendar year 2022 or later. Reclamation's projections of future reservoir elevations at Lake Powell will be updated as hydrologic conditions in the basin change and as DROA plans are

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks

July 28, 2021 Hearing: *The Impacts of Overcrowding in Our National Parks on Park Resources and Visitor Experiences, and to Consider Strategic Approaches to Visitor Use Management*

Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Michael T. Reynolds

executed. These projections are updated monthly and are published in the 24-Month Study report (24-Month Study | Upper Colorado Basin | Bureau of Reclamation (usbr.gov)).