

## Lawmakers address \$12 billion deferred maintenance backlog at national parks

### July 25, 2018

In late June, Senator Rob Portman (R-OH) introduced a bill proposing to address the backlog of maintenance at U.S. national parks via a new funding program. Lena McDowall of the National Park Service (NPS) reported that the total cost of outstanding maintenance requests across all national parks is \$11.6 billion. These postponed projects include repairs at the National Mall that will cost \$800 million, according to Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke.

Senator Portman's bill, the Restore Our Parks Act (S. 3172), would use a portion of the revenue from all types of energy development on federal lands to establish and fund the NPS Legacy Restoration Fund. From fiscal years 2019 to 2023, up to fifty percent of these energy development revenues would contribute to this fund, which would be capped at \$1.3 billion annually. The Legacy Restoration Fund would not impact other funds maintained by federal energy revenue, such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The bill has bipartisan support with eleven Republican and seven Democrat cosponsors.

On July 11, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks held a legislative hearing to discuss the Restore Our Parks Act. All of the expert witnesses invited to testify at the hearing expressed support for the bill, while reiterating that a multi-year and stable funding source is needed for contracting efforts and routine maintenance of facilities. Marcia Argust of Pew Charitable Trusts estimated that the entirety of the deferred maintenance projects would create 110,000 new jobs.

Two weeks after the Senate hearing, Chairman Rob Bishop (R-UT-1) and Ranking Member Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ-3) of the House Committee on Natural Resources introduced a similar bill, the Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act (H.R. 6510), on July 25. The House bill is nearly identical to its Senate counterpart, except for an additional provision that would allow some of the funds to be spent on repairs by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). Eighty percent of the fund would be set aside for the NPS, while ten percent could be used by USFWS and five percent could be used by each of BLM and BIE. Both the House and Senate bills await further action by their respective committees.

*Sources: E&E News; The Hill; U.S. Senate, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources; U.S. House, Committee On Natural Resources.*

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