

Amendment 680 – Prohibits new construction by the National Park Service until existing park sites, structures, trails, and transportation infrastructure are open and accessible to the general public and pose no health or safety risk.

- America's national parks are threatened by a staggering maintenance backlog.
- Despite unprecedented funding, the situation is growing worse by the day.
- The crown jewels of our National Parks system are crumbling (Statue of Liberty, USS Arizona)
- Americans are increasingly being denied access to their national parks because of the growing maintenance backlog.
- The health and safety of parks' visitors and employees is threatened by the growing maintenance backlog.
- Congress' appetite for new parks and earmarks threaten previous commitments to our national parks.
- Similarly, the agency has proven it cannot be relied up to prioritize the maintenance of existing obligations.
- Until Congress and the Administration prioritize the maintenance of existing national parks' obligations, the problem will continue to grow worse.
- This amendment is simple—no expensive new construction projects until Congress first protects our most cherished national parks.

Amendment 680 – Prohibits new construction by the National Park Service until existing park sites, structures, trails, and transportation infrastructure are open and accessible to the general public and pose no health or safety risk.

Throughout the nation, America's national parks are crumbling.

Many sites are in terrible disrepair; they are often closed to the American public and pose a serious health and safety risk to visitors and employees of the National Park Service.

The massive lands bill threatens to make this situation worse by adding new responsibilities at a time when the Park Service is unable to keep up with the demands of the existing system.

It will also diminish the impact of the recent stimulus funds intended to help the NPS reduce its nearly \$10 billion maintenance backlog

This amendment will ensure that the American people continue to enjoy access to their national treasures, by requiring that the park service focuses its construction efforts on existing threats to public access and safety.

America's national parks are threatened by a staggering maintenance backlog.

According to the Congressional Research Service, the Park Service backlog reached \$9.6 billion in FY 2007, having more than doubled since FY 1999.¹

A recent memo prepared by the Facility Management Division of the National Park Service reveals at least 10 states where NPS maintenance backlogs exceed \$100 million. At least twenty states have facilities with deferred maintenance exceeding \$50 million² (this excludes over \$4 billion in NPS road/bridge backlogs).

¹ Vincent, Carol Hardy, Congressional Research Service: National Park Management; August 15, 2008.

² Summary Provided to Congressional Research Service: NPS Asset Management Challenge, December 11, 2007.

Despite historic appropriation levels, a recent congressional inquiry revealed that the NPS maintenance backlog grew by \$400 million during a nine month period last year.³

On top of all that Congress continues to authorize, the NPS must manage the following:

- 27,000 historic structures
- 7,580 administrative and public use buildings
- 26,830 campsites
- 8,505 monuments and statues
- 505 dams
- 1,804 bridges and tunnels
- 8,500 miles of road to maintain
- 680 water treatment and wastewater systems
- 84+ million acres of land under management of the National Park Service;
- 391 units
- 54 National Wilderness Areas/44 million acres
- 15 National Wild and Scenic Rivers/2,451 miles
- 40 National Heritage Areas
- 28 National Memorials
- 4 National Parkways

³ National Park Service: Excel Spreadsheet Prepared for Senator Tom Coburn, October 27, 2008.

- 120 National Historic Parks
- 20 National Preserves and Reserves
- 24 National Battlefields
- 18 National Recreation Areas
- 74 National Monument Areas
- 10 National Seashores
- 4 National Lakeshores
- 3,565 miles of National Scenic Trails
- 12,250 miles of unpaved trails
- 46 miles of Canadian border/285 miles of the Mexican to patrol/manage
- 272 million visits annually

The crown jewels of our National Parks system are crumbling.

The USS Arizona (where 1,117 American patriots lost their lives in the savage Pearl Harbor attack) now faces a maintenance backlog of \$33.4 million. “The visitor center at the USS Arizona Memorial in Hawaii is sinking and may cost as much as \$20 million to repair—a cost that exceeds the entire annual budget for the seven national park sites in the state.”⁴

The Gettysburg National Battlefield, site of the 51,000 American casualties, now faces \$29.4 million backlog.

⁴ National Parks Conservation Association; “Overwhelming Backlogs, Maintenance Needs;” ast accessed on February 3, 2009; http://www.npca.org/what_we_do/visitor_experience/backlog/maintenance.html.

Perhaps the greatest symbol of our nation, Statue of Liberty Park faces a \$196.9 million maintenance backlog.⁵

Grand Canyon National Park faces a backlog of \$299.2 million.⁶

In Montana, Glacier National Park faces a staggering maintenance backlog of \$400 million, including the stabilization of historic structures.⁷ A former NPS official described the park as “bankrupt.”⁸

A leading parks advocacy group places the Petrified Forest National Park among the most ten most endangered parks in America⁹.

Americans are increasingly being denied access to their national parks because of the growing maintenance backlog.

According to a recent article in the Arizona Republic, Grand Canyon Park (10 million visitors annually), “Popular Grand Canyon trails are badly eroded, leading to more and more closures.”¹⁰

According to Representative Rob Bishop (UT), Dinosaur National Monument is largely inaccessible due to its overwhelming backlog: The center is designed “so a kid can go in there and actually see within the mountainside the fossils that are still there and see what scientists say is the beginning and be able to put them together. Unfortunately, no one has been able to access this building for the last 10 years because we don't have enough money to fix this building, which has been condemned.”¹¹

The health and safety of parks' visitors and employees is threatened by the growing maintenance backlog.

⁵ National Park Service: Excel Spreadsheet Prepared for Senator Tom Coburn, October 27, 2008.

⁶ National Park Service: Excel Spreadsheet Prepared for Senator Tom Coburn, October 27, 2008.

⁷ National Parks Conservation Association: “Overwhelming Backlog,” Last accessed on March 13, 2009, http://www.npca.org/what_we_do/visitor_experience/backlog/maintenance.html.

⁸ Jamison, Michael, The Missoulian: “Visits, and bills, rise - Funding cuts, more tourists strain infrastructure,” <http://www.missoula.com/news/node/1721>.

⁹ National Parks Conservation Association: “Group Names Annual List of America's Ten Most Endangered National Parks,” April 4, 2001, http://www.npca.org/media_center/press_releases/2001/page-27598999.html.

¹⁰ The Arizona Republic, Editorial: “A Chasm in Funding,” December 29, 2008, <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/opinions/articles/2008/12/29/20081229mon1-29.html>.

¹¹ Bishop, Representative Rob, Congressional Record, Page H 3284, March 11, 2009.

According to the Inspector General of the Department of the Interior, “Financial management has remained a top challenge for the department,” “[And] our work has documented decades of maintenance, health and safety issues that place [Interior] employees and the public at risk.”¹²

A recent report by the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees found, “widespread evidence of major problems that will be evident - including decreased safety for visitors, longer emergency response times, endangerment of protected resources, and dirtier and less well-maintained parks - and that the problems will only grow worse in the coming years.”¹³

Examples of impact on parks’ visitors include:

At the Grand Canyon, “The cross-canyon waterline is deteriorating so badly that it had 30-some leaks this year and is in danger of failing entirely.”¹⁴

At Yellowstone, “about 10,000 gallons of raw sewage leaked from a broken pipe and may have flowed into a trout-spawning stream in Yellowstone National Park.”¹⁵

At Carlsbad Caverns, maintenance needs were so pressing at one point that sewer lines were actually leaking into the historic caves. Carlsbad superintendent Benjamin said: “Believe me, if there's sewage dripping down into that cavern, people are not going to believe we're doing a good job.”¹⁶

Congress’ appetite for new parks and earmarks threaten previous commitments to our national parks.

¹² Kendall, Mary, Acting Inspector General of the Department of the Interior: “Testimony before House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Interior,” March 3, 2009.

¹³ Coalition of National Park Service Retirees: “A Reality Check- What Visitors Will To America’s National Parks Will Experience During Summer 2006,” June 15, 2006, <http://www.npsretirees.org/cnpsr/reality-check-summer-survey>.

¹⁴ The Arizona Republic, Editorial: “A Chasm in Funding,” December 29, 2008, <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/opinions/articles/2008/12/29/20081229mon1-29.html>.

¹⁵ New York Times: National Brief, June 9, 2001, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B03E2D9143EF93AA35755C0A9679C8B63>.

¹⁶ NATIONAL PARKS FAST FALLING INTO DISREPAIR: From aging facilities to overgrown trails, reaching the backcountry is getting harder. May 25, 2004 <http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/0525/p01s02-usgn.html>.

The National Park system has grown to nearly 400 units, covering over 84 million acres, with a \$9.6 billion (and growing) maintenance backlog.¹⁷

- From FY 2001 to FY 2008, Congress appropriated nearly \$540 million for new land acquisition for Park Service.¹⁸
- Since 2000, Congress has increased the number of National Heritage Areas from 18 to 40. In January, Senate overwhelming voted to add 10 additional heritage areas.¹⁹
- In the 110th Congress, 35 bills were introduced to expand the National Wild and Scenic River system. The National Park Service already manages over 3,000 miles.²⁰ This bill includes over 1,200 additional miles
- Congress has designed 26 National Trails covering more than 80,000 miles. S. 22 will add 6 additional routes to the National Trails system.²¹
- In April 2008, Congress passed and the President signed Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008, a massive public lands bills that impacted land (and property rights) in over 30 states.²² The legislation authorized over \$380 million in new spending, much of it at the National Park Service, and did not include a single way to pay for it.

Similarly, the agency is unable to prioritize the maintenance of existing obligations, over new commitments.

¹⁷ Vincent, Carol Hardy, Congressional Research Service Report For Congress: “National Park Management;” Updated August 15, 2008.

¹⁸ Vincent, Carol Hardy, Congressional Research Service: Land and Water Conservation Fund, Overview, Funding History, and Current Issues;” See Table 1; Last Updated on January 7, 2009.

¹⁹ Vincent, Carol Hardy, Congressional Research Service Report For Congress; “National Heritage Areas: Background, Proposals and Current Issues;” January 9, 2009; <http://apps.crs.gov/products/rl/pdf/RL33462.pdf> .

²⁰ Vincent, Carol Hardy, Congressional Research Service Report For Congress: “National Park Management;” Updated August 15, 2008. <http://apps.crs.gov/products/rl/pdf/RL33484.pdf> .

²¹ Calvert, Kori and Sandra Johnson, Congressional Research Service; “Recreation on Federal Lands;” October 28, 2008; <http://apps.crs.gov/products/rl/pdf/RL33525.pdf>.

²² http://energy.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressReleases.Detail&PressRelease_id=79919b9b-6235-4e23-bdeb-49d6a9a2c388&Month=5&Year=2008&Party=0

The National Park Service has announced plans to implant microchips in the “stately saguaro cactus” for monitoring in Arizona.²³

Last year, the National Park Service gave \$50,000 to Salem, Massachusetts to install 32 signs directing tourists in town for Halloween to off-street parking and two public parking garages.²⁴

Last year, the National Park Service, Save America’s Treasures program paid \$150,000 for a statewide barn census in Vermont.²⁵

It also spent \$60,000 for Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in Missouri for “Parkpalooza,” an event featuring “rock climbing, lost worlds, music and dance and a photo contest.”²⁶

Until Congress and the Administration prioritize the maintenance of existing national parks’ obligations, the problem will continue to grow worse.

According to the Congressional Research Service, the Park Service backlog reached \$9.6 billion in FY 2007, having more than doubled since FY 1999.²⁷

Despite historic appropriation levels, a recent congressional inquiry revealed that the NPS maintenance backlog grew by \$400 million during a nine month period last year.²⁸

According to the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees this is occurring in part because, “there is no meaningful program of preventative maintenance program in the NPS because very few parks now have the resources to carry one out. The increased preventative maintenance

²³ Rotstein, Arthur, “Feds to use computer chips to foil cactus thieves,” *Associated Press*, October 9, 2008, <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/local/articles/2008/10/09/20081009saguaro1009.html>.

²⁴ Dalton, Tom, “City installs new signs,” *The Salem News*, October 22, 2008, http://salemnews.com/punews/local_story_295231951.html.

²⁵ Cormier, Amanda, “Vermont barn census lays foundation for preservation efforts,” *Middlebury College Student Weekly*, November 13, 2008, <http://media.www.middleburycampus.com/media/storage/paper446/news/2008/11/13/LocalNews/Vermont.Barn.Census.Lays.Foundation.For.Preservation.Efforts-3540249-page2.shtml>.

²⁶ Website of the National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/jeff/parkmgmt/upload/parkpalooza.pdf>; Parkpalooza website, <http://www.nps.gov/jeff/planyourvisit/parkpalooza.htm>.

²⁷ Vincent, Carol Hardy, Congressional Research Service: National Park Management; August 15, 2008.

²⁸ National Park Service: Excel Spreadsheet Prepared for Senator Tom Coburn, October 27, 2008.

deferrals then turn into a big increase of the already multi-billion-dollar NPS maintenance backlog.”²⁹

Until Congress and the Administration place long term commitments, over short term political gain, the NPS will never be able to practice the kind of preventative maintenance necessary to ensure the success of our national parks for their second century.

The Coburn amendment is simple—No expensive new construction projects until Congress keeps it word (and commitment) to our national parks’ crown jewels.

This amendment will prioritize the rehabilitation and reconstruction of our existing national parks obligations, over new construction.

An exception is provided when the costs of a rehabilitation project exceeds the cost of new construction.

This is common sense-- Individuals do not build additions their homes when the roof is caving in. Neither should the National Park Service or Congress.

²⁹ Coalition of National Park Service Retirees: “A Reality Check- What Visitors Will To America’s National Parks Will Experience During Summer 2006,” June 15, 2006, <http://www.npsretirees.org/cnpsr/reality-check-summer-survey>.