

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-17-136](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

The Park Service manages more than 75,000 assets, including buildings, roads, and water systems, at 413 park units across all 50 states. In 2015, the agency estimated that its deferred maintenance on these assets was \$11.9 billion.

GAO was asked to review how the Park Service manages its maintenance needs. This report examines, among other things, (1) agency allocations to maintain assets in fiscal years 2006 through 2015, (2) the amount and composition of the agency's deferred maintenance in fiscal years 2009 through 2015, and (3) how the agency makes maintenance decisions. To conduct this work, GAO analyzed Park Service allocation data for fiscal years 2006 through 2015 and deferred maintenance data in fiscal years 2009 (first year data for all assets was available) through 2015 (most current data available); reviewed planning and guidance documents and compared the process for making asset management decisions to guidance developed by the National Academies, among others; and interviewed Park Service officials at headquarters, all seven regions, and 21 park units selected to include those with large and small amounts of deferred maintenance, among other things. This sample is not generalizable to all park units.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Park Service evaluate the Capital Investment Strategy and results to assess whether it has achieved its intended outcomes. The Department of the Interior agreed with GAO's recommendation.

View [GAO-17-136](#). For more information, contact Anne-Marie Fennell at (202) 512-3841 or [fennella@gao.gov](mailto:fennella@gao.gov).

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## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

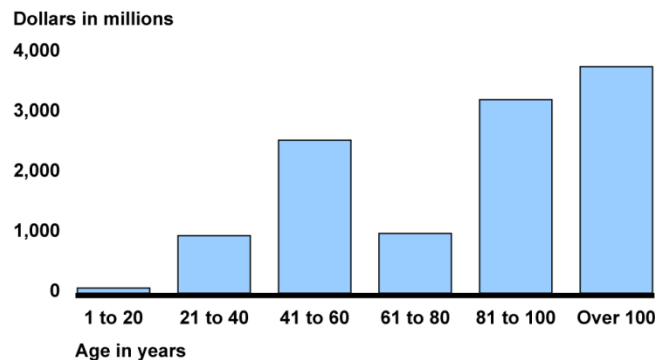
# Process Exists for Prioritizing Asset Maintenance Decisions, but Evaluation Could Improve Efforts

## What GAO Found

In fiscal years 2006 through 2015, the Department of the Interior's National Park Service (Park Service) allocated, on average, \$1.16 billion annually to maintain assets. In fiscal year 2015, allocations to maintenance accounted for about one-third (or \$1.08 billion) of the agency's total funding of \$3.3 billion. The largest portion of maintenance funds in fiscal year 2015 was allocated to facility operations, which includes maintenance that is routine in nature, such as maintenance of trails.

The Park Service's deferred maintenance—maintenance of its assets that was not performed when it should have been and is delayed for a future period—averaged \$11.3 billion from fiscal years 2009 through 2015. Bridges, tunnels, and paved roadways consistently made up the largest share of the agency's deferred maintenance, accounting for half of all deferred maintenance in fiscal year 2015. Older park units have the most deferred maintenance, with \$10.5 billion in fiscal year 2015 in park units established more than 40 years ago.

National Park Service's Deferred Maintenance by Age of Park Unit in Fiscal Year 2015



Source: GAO analysis of National Park Service deferred maintenance data. | GAO-17-136

The Park Service uses several tools to determine an asset's importance and condition and assign maintenance priority. Park unit staff assess the condition of the asset and identify maintenance projects. Once identified, park unit staff use the agency's Capital Investment Strategy to evaluate and rank projects. Projects score higher if they target critical assets with deferred maintenance. Fiscal year 2015 was the first budget year in which projects ranked using the strategy were funded, and regional and park unit officials said that it is too soon to determine if the strategy is meeting its objectives, such as maintaining the condition of its most important assets. However, the Park Service does not have a plan or timeframe for evaluating whether the strategy has been successful. A senior official said that the agency has not determined what is needed to begin such an evaluation and that it would be beneficial to verify that the Capital Investment Strategy is achieving intended outcomes. According to the National Academies Federal Facilities Council, it is important that agencies track the outcome of investments to improve decision making and asset management. Evaluating the strategy may help the Park Service determine if the strategy is achieving intended outcomes or if changes need to be made.