



Natural Resources Council of Maine  
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Comments by the Natural Resources Council of Maine on the  
Proposed Fee Increase for 17 National Parks  
Dec. 22, 2017

The Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) is a citizen supported not-for-profit organization whose mission is to protect, restore, and conserve Maine's environment, now and for future generations. For more than 50 years, the Natural Resources Council of Maine has been protecting the places and way of life that make Maine so special. NRCM harnesses the power of the law, science, and the voices of more than 20,000 members and supporters statewide and beyond.

NRCM appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed fee increase for 17 national parks, including Acadia National Park located here in Maine. While we support the need to address the deferred maintenance backlog at national parks, we believe the proposed fee increase is unacceptably large and would result in fewer Maine residents and visitors having the opportunity to visit Acadia.

National Parks are one of our country's greatest natural assets and average citizens should not be priced out of the ability to visit them in favor of the wealthy. A more modest fee increase combined with increased federal appropriations, innovative legislation like the Centennial Act and the Legacy Act, and NPS policy changes are better ways to address the maintenance backlog.

The Centennial Act is a way to encourage public/private investments in the maintenance backlog and it has successfully provided funds for trail maintenance, vista rehabilitation, and carriage road drainage projects at Acadia. The Legacy Act would establish a new dedicated funding source for high priority deferred maintenance projects from unallocated off-shore oil revenues.

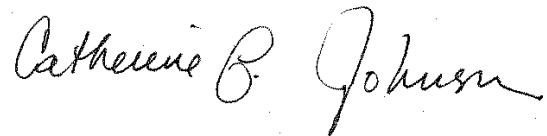
Inadequate federal appropriations in the past are the reason the deferred maintenance backlog exists. Unfortunately the proposed FY18 budget continues that practice by proposing to cut \$93 million from the National Park Service's maintenance budget. Our national parks belong to all the people of the United States and it is appropriate that federal appropriations funded by all tax payers provide adequate funds to maintain AND manage our parks. Rather than cuts in

federal appropriations, increased federal appropriations for management and maintenance of our national parks should become the norm.

Finally, NPS policy changes could offer additional options to raise revenue while still allowing broad visitation to the parks. For example, expanding the on-line option to purchase park passes has increased compliance with the fee structure at Acadia and could be expanded to other parks. In addition, Acadia (and other parks) could offer a two or three day pass at a lower fee, enabling Maine residents to visit for the weekend without having to purchase a week-long pass.

Simply raising the fee by almost 300% will likely drive Maine residents and visitors to other free or less expensive destinations in the state and have the opposite of the intended effect on Acadia's income. We encourage the adoption of a much more modest fee increase combined with these other strategies to address the deferred maintenance backlog at national parks.

Thanks you for the opportunity to comment.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine B. Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "C".

Catherine B. Johnson  
Forests and Wildlife Project Director