

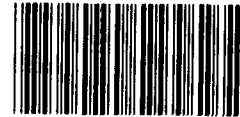
GAO

Fact Sheet for the Honorable
Joseph M. McDade
House of Representatives

September 1991

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Selected Visitor and Cost Data



145080

RESTRICTED—Not to be released outside the
**General Accounting Office unless specifically
approved by the Office of Congressional
Relations.**



United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Resources, Community, and
Economic Development Division

B-245770

September 30, 1991

The Honorable Joseph M. McDade
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. McDade:

In response to your request of August 1, 1991, this fact sheet presents data on selected aspects of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service operations. Specifically, we are providing (1) data on visitor accidents and fatalities and criminal offenses reported at the parks; (2) a discussion of the Park Service's hazardous waste program; and (3) a list of parks established since 1970 that have, or are projected to have, land acquisition and construction appropriations exceeding \$40 million. Although you requested this information for a 20-year period, the Park Service does not have reliable data for that time period in all cases. Consequently, most of the data we are providing are for shorter time periods.

ACCIDENTS, FATALITIES, AND
CRIMINAL OFFENSES

The Park Service data show that, in fiscal year 1990, 1,077 visitor accidents resulting in some type of personal injury occurred in the national parks. Through June 30, 1991--the first 9 months of fiscal year 1991--222 visitor accidents occurred. These numbers do not necessarily mean that there will be fewer visitor accidents in fiscal year 1991 than in fiscal year 1990. According to Park Service officials, most accidents occur in the summer months when visitor park attendance is high, and the summer months are not included in the fiscal year 1991 statistics. In both fiscal years 1990 and 1991, about two-thirds of the accidents required first aid or medical attention and about one-third resulted in a temporary disability (e.g., broken arm) to the visitor. (See sec. 1.)

From calendar year 1971 through mid-August 1991, nearly 3,300 visitor fatalities from accidental causes occurred in the national parks, of which 88 percent were caused by drownings, motor vehicle accidents, and falls. Causes for the other 12 percent of the fatalities included such incidents as

avalanches, bear attacks, land slides, lightning, and accidental shootings. (See sec. 2.)

Over 41,000 criminal offenses, classified by the Park Service as part I and part II offenses, were reported in the national parks annually, on average, during calendar years 1987-90. About 6,500 of these were part I criminal offenses, consisting of homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny/theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson, while nearly 35,000 of these were part II criminal offenses. Part II offenses include all other crimes, such as simple assaults, vandalism, carrying/possessing weapons, drug abuse violations, and resource violations (e.g., poaching). (See sec. 3.)

POTENTIAL HAZARDOUS
WASTE PROBLEMS

The Park Service conducted a servicewide inventory in November 1987 to initially identify sites that might potentially have a hazardous waste problem. On the basis of that inventory and subsequent information collected and refined over the years, the Park Service identified 1,257 sites, as of mid-August 1991, that need to be assessed over the next few years to determine the actual extent, if any, of the hazardous waste problem. The sites include, for example, landfills, dumps, and abandoned mines containing such contaminants as PCBs, asbestos, and mine waste/tailings.

The Park Service categorized the 1,257 sites into 28 high inspection priority sites (immediate health and environmental risk; inspect as soon as possible); 9 medium inspection priority sites (no immediate health risk; schedule inspection); and 1,220 low inspection priority sites (minimal levels of waste; inspect after higher priority sites). The Park Service identified 12 (9 high inspection and 3 medium inspection) of the 1,257 sites as being the primary responsibility of a state, city, or another federal agency to assess. Until complete assessments are made, the precise prioritization of the sites, as well as the cost to correct the problems, cannot be ascertained. More sites may be added as new information becomes available.

Fiscal year 1991 is the first year that the Park Service targeted funds specifically for a hazardous waste program. Of a total \$7.2 million budget, about \$4.7 million was targeted to test for leaks in 1,007 underground storage tanks in the national parks, and if necessary, clean up the pollution, and remove and replace the tanks. Contents of the tanks include, for example, gasoline, diesel fuel, and

heating oil. Another \$1.6 million was planned to be used to dispose of hazardous waste generated and stored at national parks (e.g., pesticides and paint). Another approximately \$625,000 was targeted to assess 19 (mainly high inspection priority sites) of the 1,257 sites in the national parks to determine the potential extent of hazardous waste/toxic substances. The remaining approximately \$275,000 of the \$7.2 million was budgeted for salaries and administrative purposes. Actual costs for testing, pollution cleanup, and replacement of tanks; stored waste disposal; and assessments are not yet available.

According to the Park Service, it managed hazardous waste before fiscal year 1991 in a reactive manner, responding to immediate hazardous waste threats on a case-by-case basis. The most significant hazardous waste problem it identified was the Krejci dump site in the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area. In 1986, the Environmental Protection Agency classified the site, containing such contaminants as PCBs and heavy metals, as an emergency toxic waste problem and borrowed Superfund money to assess the site. Over the last several years, the Park Service has received appropriations to reimburse the Environmental Protection Agency and to begin site cleanup. The Park Service expects the total assessment and cleanup costs for the Krejci dump site to be about \$15.3 million.

LAND ACQUISITION AND CONSTRUCTION APPROPRIATIONS

Of the 115 parks established since 1970, 13 had land acquisition and construction appropriations exceeding \$40 million, according to the Park Service. Section 4 lists, for each of the 13 parks, the land acquisition and construction appropriations through fiscal year 1991, as well as the fiscal year 1992 budget request.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

We interviewed National Park Service officials in Washington, D.C., and reviewed and analyzed pertinent agency statistics and documents. As agreed with your office, because of time constraints, we did not verify the statistics provided. Although you requested data covering 20 years, Park Service headquarters could only readily provide 20-years' worth of data on visitor fatalities. Consequently, as agreed with your office, we obtained data on visitor accidents for 2 years, criminal offenses reported for 4 years, and hazardous waste problems for 1 year. Regarding land acquisition and construction cost data that you

requested, the Park Service said it centrally maintains land acquisition costs but not construction costs. Instead, for consistency of information and as agreed with your office, we obtained land acquisition and construction appropriations rather than costs for 20 years.

Regarding visitor accident statistics, the Park Service cited its records retention program as requiring that it maintain visitor accident reports for 2 years, unless such reports are part of a tort claim. Consequently, the Park Service provided visitor accident data for fiscal year 1990 and fiscal year 1991 through June 30. Regarding criminal offense statistics, the Park Service does not consider its data reliable for years before calendar year 1982. Furthermore, part II criminal offenses for 1982-86 differed from those for 1987-90. Statistics for 1991 will not be available until early 1992. Therefore, we are providing criminal offense statistics for calendar years 1987-90.

The Park Service could only provide estimated budget figures for its hazardous waste program for fiscal year 1991. Actual figures will not be available until after the end of the fiscal year. Before 1991, hazardous waste initiatives were funded from other Park Service accounts, such as operations and construction. Park Service headquarters was not able to extract hazardous waste expenditures from other expenditures in these accounts except for funding for the Krejci dump site. Because of the emergency nature of the cleanup and the significant amount of funds needed, the Park Service received specific appropriations from the construction account for this cleanup. Our work was performed during August and September 1991.

- - - - -

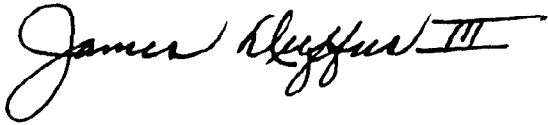
We met with Park Service officials in Washington, D.C., to discuss the data in this fact sheet. They agreed with the facts as presented.

Unless you publicly announce the contents of the fact sheet earlier, we plan no further distribution of this fact sheet until 30 days from the date of this letter. At that time, we will send copies to interested parties and will make copies available to others upon request.

B-245770

Please contact me at (202) 275-7756 if you or your staff have any questions concerning this fact sheet. Major contributors to this fact sheet are listed in appendix I.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James Duffus III". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

James Duffus III
Director, Natural Resources
Management Issues

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
LETTER	1
SECTION	
1 VISITOR ACCIDENT DATA BY SEVERITY AT NATIONAL PARKS, FISCAL YEARS 1990 AND 1991	7
2 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF VISITOR FATALITIES BY ACCIDENTAL CAUSE AT NATIONAL PARKS, CALENDAR YEARS 1971-91	8
3 NUMBER OF CRIMINAL OFFENSES REPORTED BY TYPE AT NATIONAL PARKS, CALENDAR YEARS 1987-90	9
4 PARKS ESTABLISHED SINCE 1970 WHERE APPROPRIATIONS (LAND ACQUISITION AND CONSTRUCTION) EXCEED \$40 MILLION	10
APPENDIX	
I MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS FACT SHEET	11

SECTION 1

VISITOR ACCIDENT DATA BY SEVERITY AT
NATIONAL PARKS, FISCAL YEARS 1990 AND 1991^a

<u>Severity of injury</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>(Percentage)</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>(Percentage)</u>
First aid	228	(21)	70	(32)
Medical attention	518	(48)	73	(33)
Temporarily disabled	322	(30)	76	(34)
Permanently disabled	<u>9</u>	(1)	<u>3</u>	(1)
Total	<u>1,077</u>		<u>222</u>	

^aThrough June 30, 1991, excluding accidents occurring in the North Atlantic and Western regions. These regions are not yet part of the headquarters reporting system. The reporting system includes accidents resulting in medical treatment, a potential tort claim, government property damage, or a fatality (see sec. 2). Excluded are accidents of a minor nature and those involving motor vehicle or boating accidents.

Source: National Park Service.

SECTION 2

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF VISITOR FATALITIES BY
ACCIDENTAL CAUSE AT NATIONAL PARKS, CALENDAR YEARS 1971-91^a

<u>Calendar year</u>	<u>Drowning</u>	<u>Motor vehicle accident</u>	<u>Fall</u>	<u>Miscel- laneous^b</u>	<u>Total</u>
1971	49	78	28	12	167
1972	61	49	20	14	144
1973	73	59	28	19	179
1974	73	39	22	21	155
1975	56	57	22	10	145
1976	60	56	27	10	153
1977	77	63	36	14	190
1978	81	65	35	10	191
1979	68	76	34	16	194
1980	83	65	41	24	213
1981	61	69	29	26	185
1982	100	48	18	23	189
1983	63	50	27	17	157
1984	57	44	23	31	155
1985	53	38	31	25	147
1986	44	47	21	21	133
1987	42	44	18	34	138
1988	48	38	15	24	125
1989	48	47	23	16	134
1990	55	40	18	15	128
1991 ^a	<u>34</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>55</u>
Total	<u>1,286</u>	<u>1,079</u>	<u>524</u>	<u>388</u>	<u>3,277</u>
Percentage	39	33	16	12	100

^aThrough August 13, 1991.

^bMiscellaneous includes causes such as avalanches, lightning, accidental shootings, exposure, bear attacks, and boating accidents.

Source: National Park Service.

SECTION 3

NUMBER OF CRIMINAL OFFENSES REPORTED BY TYPE

AT NATIONAL PARKS, CALENDAR YEARS 1987-90

<u>Part I offenses</u>	<u>Calendar year</u>				<u>Total</u>	<u>Average^a</u>
	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>		
Homicide	15	20	9	24	68	17
Forcible rape	79	79	73	92	323	81
Robbery	197	215	123	184	719	180
Aggravated assault	543	300	441	448	1,732	433
Burglary	926	801	1,009	1,180	3,916	979
Larceny/theft	4,259	4,378	4,548	4,643	17,828	4,457
Motor vehicle theft	294	313	213	310	1,130	283
Arson	104	89	116	128	437	109
Total	<u>6,417</u>	<u>6,195</u>	<u>6,532</u>	<u>7,009</u>	<u>26,153</u>	<u>6,538</u>
<u>Part II offenses</u>						
Simple assaults	181	753	346	513	1,793	448
Forgery/counterfeiting	8	19	19	20	66	17
Fraud	59	34	51	65	209	52
Embezzlement	31	12	6	28	77	19
Stolen property	348	367	897	1,208	2,820	705
Vandalism	4,000	3,484	3,363	3,289	14,136	3,534
Weapons	1,532	1,559	1,676	1,592	6,359	1,590
Prostitution/ commercialized vice	58	35	44	106	243	61
Sex offenses	516	635	745	614	2,510	628
Gambling	5	3	4	4	16	4
Driving while intoxicated	1,623	1,743	1,922	2,073	7,361	1,840
Drunkenness	3,197	9,173	5,617	9,173	27,160	6,790
Drug abuse	4,333	4,336	4,847	4,764	18,280	4,570
Disorderly conduct	2,404	5,236	2,737	2,692	13,069	3,267
Resource violations	<u>12,932</u>	<u>13,678</u>	<u>7,436</u>	<u>10,920</u>	<u>44,966</u>	<u>11,242</u>
Total	<u>31,227</u>	<u>41,067</u>	<u>29,710</u>	<u>37,061</u>	<u>139,065</u>	<u>34,766</u>
Total part I and II offenses	<u>37,644</u>	<u>47,262</u>	<u>36,242</u>	<u>44,070</u>	<u>165,218</u>	<u>41,305</u>

^aColumns may not add due to rounding.

Source: National Park Service.

SECTION 4

PARKS ESTABLISHED SINCE 1970 WHERE APPROPRIATIONS
(LAND ACQUISITION AND CONSTRUCTION^a) EXCEED \$40 MILLION

<u>Parks</u> (Dollars in millions)	<u>Appropriations through fiscal year 1991</u>			<u>Fiscal year 1992 budget request</u>			<u>Grand total</u>	<u>Ranking by total dollars</u>
	<u>Land</u>	<u>Construc- tion</u>	<u>Total^b</u>	<u>Land</u>	<u>Construc- tion</u>	<u>Total</u>		
Big Cypress National Preserve	\$182.4	\$ 0	\$182.4	\$ 6.0	\$ 0	\$ 6.0	\$188.4	1
Big Thicket National Preserve	96.2	3.5	99.7	0	0	0	99.7	4
Buffalo National River	45.3	14.6	59.8	0	0	0	59.8	10
Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area	79.9	1.4	81.3	0	0.9	0.9	82.2	6
Congaree Swamp National Monument	79.7	0	79.7	2.0	0	2.0	81.7	7
Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area	108.0	29.5	137.5	0	3.5	3.5	141.1	2
Gateway National Recreation Area	1.0	64.2	65.2	0	0	0	65.2	9
Golden Gate National Recreation Area	72.4	8.3	80.8	0	0	0	80.8	8
Gulf Islands National Seashore	27.5	23.6	51.1	0	0	0	51.1	13
New River Gorge National River	31.6	21.0	52.6	0	0	0	52.6	12
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area	115.1	0.1	115.2	11.5	0	11.5	126.7	3
Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore	78.7	6.1	84.8	0	2.0	2.0	86.7	5
Voyageurs National Park	43.1	10.3	53.4	0	0	0	53.4	11

^aIncludes planning, engineering and design.

^bTotals may not add due to rounding.

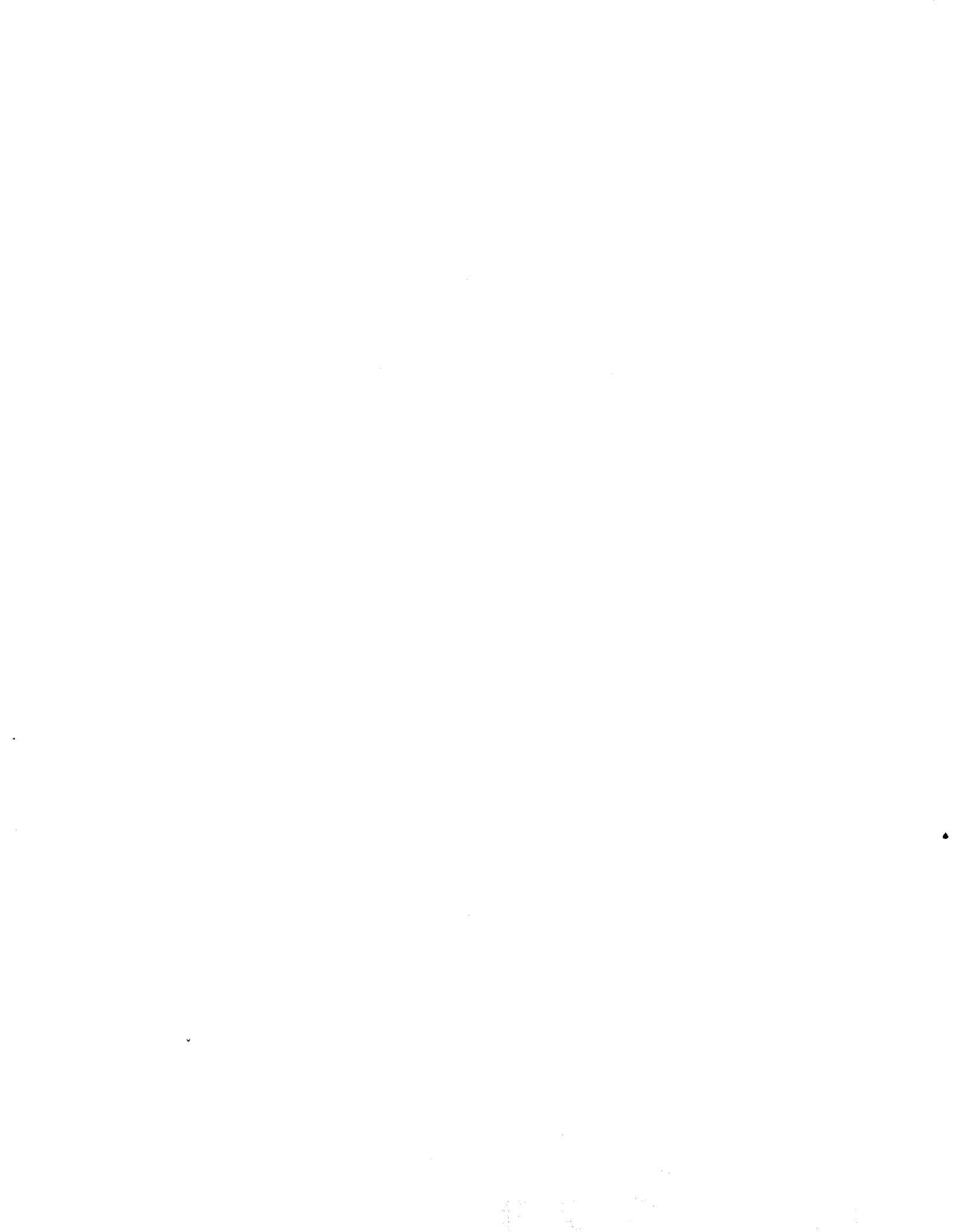
Source: National Park Service.

MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS FACT SHEET

RESOURCES, COMMUNITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

James R. Hunt, Assistant Director
Rosellen McCarthy, Evaluator-in-Charge
June M. Foster, Staff Evaluator

(140759)



Ordering Information

The first five copies of each GAO report are free. Additional copies are \$2 each. Orders should be sent to the following address, accompanied by a check or money order made out to the Superintendent of Documents, when necessary. Orders for 100 or more copies to be mailed to a single address are discounted 25 percent.

**U.S. General Accounting Office
P.O. Box 6015
Gaithersburg, MD 20877**

Orders may also be placed by calling (202) 275-6241.

**United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548**

**Official Business
Penalty for Private Use \$300**

**First-Class Mail
Postage & Fees Paid
GAO
Permit No. G100**