



Highlights of [GAO-03-992T](#), a report to the Subcommittee on National Parks, Historic Preservation, and Recreation, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

GAO, the Department of the Interior, and others have reported on the National Park Service's efforts to develop an effective maintenance management process that would, among other things, enable the agency to accurately and reliably estimate the amount of deferred maintenance on its assets. Over the years, the agency's estimates of the amount of its deferred maintenance have varied widely—sometimes by billions of dollars. Currently, the agency estimates that its deferred maintenance backlog is over \$5 billion. In April 2002, GAO reported on the status of efforts to develop better deferred maintenance data. (*National Park Service: Status of Efforts to Develop Better Deferred Maintenance Data*) [Apr. 12, 2002, GAO-02-568R]

This testimony presents the results of GAO's April report and updates the progress the Park Service is making in implementing its new asset management process.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-992T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Barry T. Hill at (202) 512-3841 or hillbt@gao.gov.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Status of Agency Efforts to Address Its Maintenance Backlog

What GAO Found

In 2002, GAO reported that the design of the National Park Service's new asset management process was complete but implementation was just beginning. The new process will address deferred maintenance, commonly referred to as the maintenance backlog, as part of a much broader approach to its asset management. When fully developed and implemented, the new process will, for the first time, enable the agency to have a (1) reliable inventory of its assets; (2) process for reporting on the condition of the assets in its inventory; and (3) consistent, systemwide methodology for estimating the deferred maintenance costs for its assets. As a result, agency managers and the Congress should receive much more accurate and reliable information on the amount of deferred maintenance needs throughout the national park system. Nonetheless, while the Park Service's current efforts are promising, GAO reported on a few areas that the agency needed to address to improve the performance of the process. These included the need to (1) develop costs and schedules for completing the implementation of the process, (2) better coordinate the tracking of the process among Park Service headquarters units to avoid duplication of effort within the agency; and, (3) better define its approach to determine the condition of its assets, and how much the assessments will cost.

Since that report, the agency appears to have made progress. While the complete implementation of the process will not occur until fiscal year 2006, the agency has completed, or is nearing completion of, a number of substantial and important steps. According to the Park Service, the agency has completed its asset inventory and trained staff on the use of the required computer software. In addition, the Park Service provided information indicating that it was addressing each of the concerns identified in GAO's 2002 report. Specifically, the Park Service has developed cost and schedule estimates for the complete implementation of the process, is developing a plan to eliminate any duplication or inconsistencies between organizational components, and has completed annual condition assessments—visual inspections—on all but nine of the larger parks in the system. According to the Park Service, the work done so far are necessary steps and reflect some of the best practices of the private sector in developing and implementing an effective facility management process.