

COST/BENEFITS OF NATIONAL PARKS

Calculation of a cost/benefit measurement for a specific national park must be confined to estimation of operations cost-per-visitor. Although a cost-per-visitor calculation is one assessment of the benefits derived from a park, the figures will indicate that there is no consistent pattern of federal allocations according to park visitation rates (among parks of similar size). The criteria of need appears not to be visitation rates. In fact, the amount of federal money for parks simply goes where required to satisfactorily maintain a park (i.e. understaffed, underbudgeted, or deteriorating parks).

A cost/benefit analysis would not be valid for Lowell, as the intangible benefits of the proposed park (interpretative services, resource protection and historical preservation) are its most significant attributes. A measure of financial value of Lowell as a resource does not appear to make sense. However, the commercial benefits of urban restoration and economic revitalization would supply a definite return of federal investment.

The following budgetary breakdown shows that costs are not necessarily reduced by frequency of visitation:

<u>PARK AREA</u>	<u>ACREAGE</u>	<u>\$FISCAL 77</u>	<u>\$FISCAL 78</u>	<u>\$INCREASES</u>	<u>ANNUAL VISITOR USE</u>	<u>COST-PER-VISITOR</u>
Chalmette NHP, LA	142	205,600	205,600	-----	280,000	.73¢
Gateway NRA, NY-NJ	20,391	6,751,200	6,696,700	125,500	8,999,000	.74¢
Harpers Ferry	1,359	846,800	846,800	-----	1,124,000	.75¢
City of Refuge NHP, HI.	102	312,200	312,200	-----	370,000	.84¢
Boston NHP, MA	28	1,803,200	2,000,500	197,300	2,151,000	.93¢
Indepen- dence NHP, PA.	20	4,674,000	4,674,000	-----	4,101,000	\$1.13
Nez Perce NHP, ID.	1,838	225,000	225,000	-----	174,000	\$1.29
Carlsbad Caverns	46,425	1,181,800	1,181,800	-----	841,000	\$1.40

<u>PARK AREA</u>	<u>ACREAGE</u>	<u>\$FISCAL 77</u>	<u>\$FISCAL 78</u>	<u>\$INCREASE\$</u>	<u>ANNUAL VISITOR USE</u>	<u>COST-PER-VISITOR</u>
*Lowell National Cultural Park			1,118,000		750,000	\$1.49
Cumberland Gap NHP, KY-VA-TN	20,265	688,700	688,700	-----	437,000	\$1.57
Golden Gate NRA, CA	19,991	2,469,900	2,469,000	-----	1,469,000	\$1.68
Lyndon B. Johnson NHS, TX	241	814,000	814,000	-----	405,000	\$2.01
Yosemite NP, CA.	759,168	5,444,900	5,444,900	-----	2,849,000	\$1.91
George Rogers Clark N.H.P. IN	24	224,200	224,200	-----	109,000	\$2.05
San Juan Island NHP, AK	1,725	136,200	136,200	-----	66,000	\$2.06
Sitka NHP, AK	107	303,300	303,300	-----	81,000	\$3.74
Yellowstone NP, CA	759,198	7,603,700	7,603,000	-----	2,849,000	\$3.27
Edison NHS NJ	20	551,700	551,700	-----	53,000	\$10.40

* Estimated average operation cost and visitation