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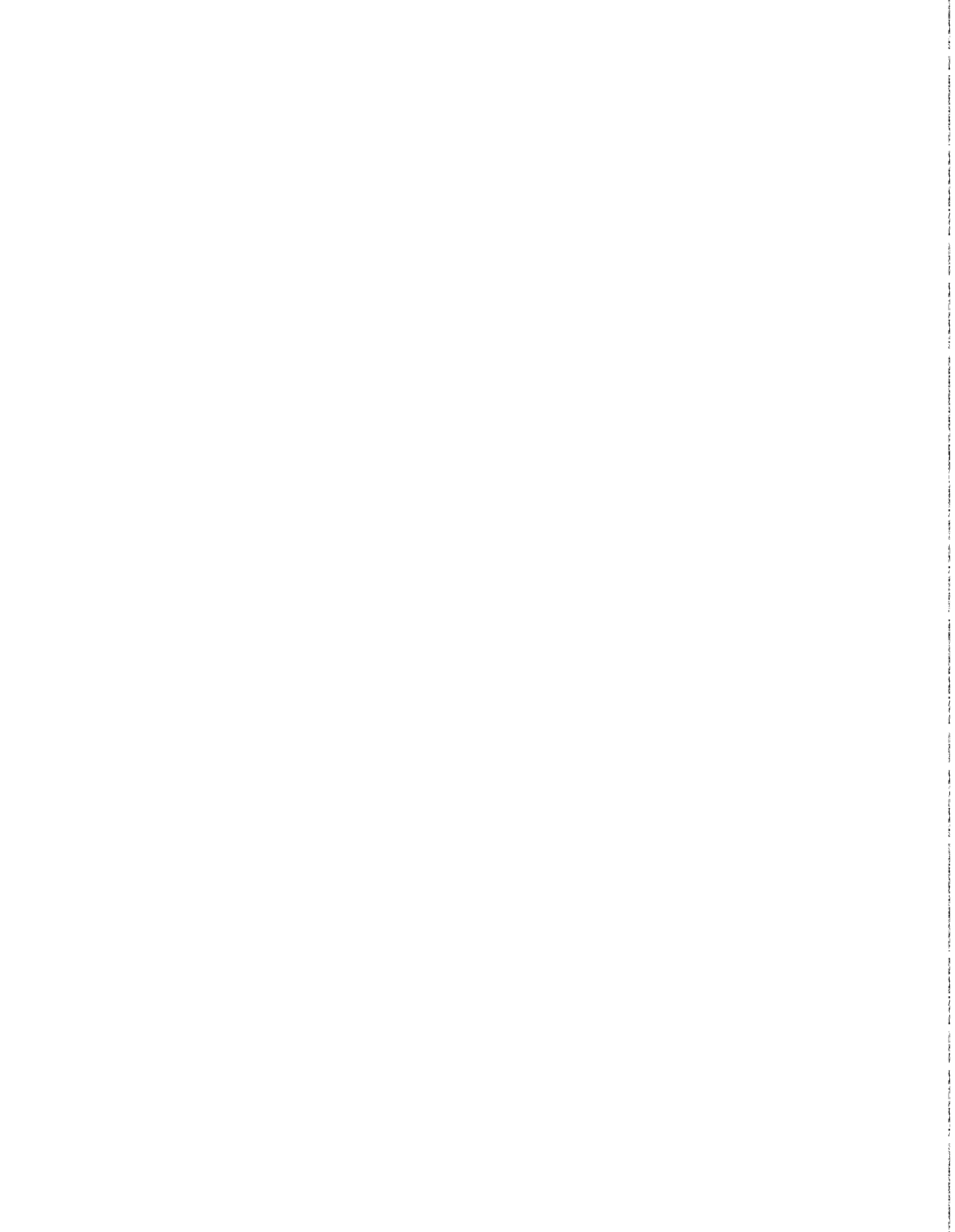
Fact Sheet for the Honorable
Wayne Owens, House of Representatives

June 1987

PARKS AND RECREATION

Maintenance Costs and Visitor Days at Two Recreation Areas







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

Resources, Community, and
Economic Development Division

B-227345

June 12, 1987

The Honorable Wayne Owens
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Owens:

In your February 19, 1987, letter and in subsequent discussions with your office, you asked us to compare the federal government's expenditures for the maintenance of Yellowstone National Park located mostly in Wyoming and Wasatch-Cache National Forest located mostly in Utah. Yellowstone and Wasatch-Cache are maintained by the Department of the Interior's National Park Service and the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, respectively. Specifically, you asked what are

- the total amount of maintenance expenditures and number of visitor days at Yellowstone National Park,
- the total amount of maintenance needs at Wasatch-Cache National Forest, and
- the total amount of maintenance expenditures and number of visitor days at Wasatch-Cache National Forest?

You also asked that the information be gathered for the latest year for which comparable data are available.

In summary, according to Yellowstone National Park and Wasatch-Cache National Forest officials, the total fiscal year 1986 maintenance expenditures at Yellowstone and Wasatch-Cache were about \$8 million and \$1.5 million, respectively. The total visitor days recorded at Yellowstone (during calendar year 1986) were about 2.4 million and at Wasatch-Cache (during fiscal year 1986) were about 5.5 million. The total unfunded maintenance needs at Wasatch-Cache are estimated at about \$10.2 million, according to Wasatch-Cache National Forest officials.


Officials of both recreation areas warn that care should be taken in comparing the statistics on the two recreation areas. For example, the two services' concept of visitor

use days are different. The chief of recreation management at Wasatch-Cache noted that Forest Service visitor use days are not comparable with those of the Park Service because they do not use comparable counting methods. The Wasatch-Cache recreation staff officer noted that comparing Wasatch-Cache and Yellowstone visitor use day statistics is not valid because the recreation areas' circumstances are so different. Wasatch-Cache is located directly adjacent to over 1 million people--many of whom often make recreational use of the forest for periods of less than 1 day. Wasatch-Cache offers recreation opportunities on a year-round basis. Yellowstone, in contrast, is at a location remote from population centers, receives heavy recreation use mainly during the 3-month summer vacation period, and has visits of longer duration. The Yellowstone assistant superintendent agrees with this assessment.

Sections 1 through 3 of this fact sheet provide detailed information on maintenance needs and expenditures and visitor days for the two recreation areas. We obtained the information from officials of the two recreation areas during April and May 1987. As agreed with your office, we did not verify the accuracy of the data presented in this fact sheet. Copies of this fact sheet are being sent to the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior; the Superintendent of Yellowstone National Park; and the Chief Forester of Wasatch-Cache National Forest. We will also make copies available to others on request. Should you desire further information, please contact me at (202) 275-7756.

Major contributors to this fact sheet are listed in appendix I.

Sincerely yours,


James Duffus III
Associate Director

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ABBREVIATION

GAO General Accounting Office

SECTION 1

**What are the total 1986 maintenance expenditures
and visitor days at Yellowstone National Park?**

GAO Response

The Department of the Interior's National Park Service is responsible for managing and maintaining the 2.2 million-acre Yellowstone National Park, located mostly in northwestern Wyoming (parts are also in Montana and Idaho). The objective of the Park Service's maintenance program is to conduct a professional program of preventive and rehabilitative maintenance and to provide for a safe, sanitary, and esthetically pleasing environment for park visitors and employees. To achieve this objective, park superintendents and maintenance personnel manage their maintenance programs, with oversight and assistance provided by regional offices.

Yellowstone National Park contains 3 major lodges, hundreds of cabins, 12 campgrounds, 23 water systems, 16 employee dormitories, 1,000 miles of trails, and about 300 miles of roads. Yellowstone National Park recorded 2,363,756 recreation visitor days during calendar year 1986.¹ Yellowstone National Park officials provided the expenditures for the maintenance of Yellowstone during fiscal year 1986 that are presented in table 1.1.

¹Determined by multiplying three persons per vehicle except for buses, snowmobiles, and foot travelers, for which an actual count is used.

Table 1.1: Maintenance Expenditures at Yellowstone National Park,
Fiscal Year 1986

<u>Type of maintenance</u>	<u>Expenditure amount</u>
Operational ^a	\$6,293,821
Cyclic ^b	423,551
Repair and rehabilitation ^c	1,175,087
Cultural resources management ^d	<u>101,060</u>
Total	<u>\$7,993,519</u>

^aOperational maintenance involves those routine activities necessary for the park's daily functions. Typical examples include janitorial and custodial services, trees and grounds maintenance, buildings and equipment repair, and water and wastewater treatment systems operation.

^bCyclic maintenance involves maintenance activities done on a fixed periodic basis when the work is predictable and the cycle is longer than once a year. Typical examples include road resealing, building reroofing, and sign replacement and repair.

^cRepair and rehabilitation projects are designed to correct health and safety deficiencies that do not require major rehabilitation or reconstruction. Typical examples include campground and trail rehabilitation, road overlay and/or reconditioning, sewer and waterline replacement, and building rewiring.

^dCultural resources management includes a broad range of activities to inventory, evaluate, preserve, and maintain historic and prehistoric sites, structures, and collections.

SECTION 2

**What are the total maintenance needs
at Wasatch-Cache National Forest?**

GAO Response

The Department of Agriculture's Forest Service is responsible for managing and maintaining the 1.6 million-acre Wasatch-Cache National Forest, located mostly in Utah (parts are also in Idaho and Wyoming). The objective of the Forest Service's maintenance program is to maintain and make minor improvements in fire and general administrative facilities that support national forest system activities. These facilities generally include administrative sites, offices, service and storage buildings, and associated water, sanitation, and electrical systems. The program also includes maintenance of airports, heliports, fire lookouts, and fire management facilities, where applicable.

Each fiscal year the Wasatch-Cache National Forest projects its total maintenance needs, including recurrent maintenance, such as garbage removal, and maintenance needed to restore existing facilities to applicable Forest Service standards. According to Wasatch-Cache officials, the total cost of maintenance needed at Wasatch-Cache, in fiscal year 1986, was \$10,231,000. This estimate did not include maintenance costs for which funding had already been provided.

SECTION 3

What are the total 1986 maintenance expenditures and visitor days at Wasatch-Cache National Forest?

GAO Response

Wasatch-Cache National Forest contains 5 resorts, 6 large downhill ski areas, 1 boat marina, 2 archery sites, 371 recreation residences (cabins), 175 developed camping sites, 15 organization camps, and about 1,040 miles of trails. Wasatch-Cache National Forest recorded 5,502,600 recreation visitor days during fiscal year 1986.¹ Wasatch-Cache National Forest officials provided the expenditures for the maintenance of Wasatch-Cache during fiscal year 1986 that are presented in table 3.1.

¹Determined by a sampling of 12 hour periods spent by one or more persons in any one activity such as camping, fishing, or hiking. (For example, 1 visitor day would equal either one person fishing for 12 hours or four persons fishing for 3 hours each.)

Table 3.1: Maintenance Expenditures at Wasatch-Cache National Forest, Fiscal Year 1986

<u>Type of maintenance</u>	<u>Expenditure amount</u>
Developed site ^a	\$ 694,000
Dispersed recreation ^b	521,000
Recreation special use ^c	208,000
Wilderness ^d	<u>117,000</u>
Total	<u>\$1,540,000</u>

^aDeveloped site maintenance includes activities to maintain 175 developed camping sites (water, electricity, and other facilities provided), with a capacity of 19,604 people at one time.

^bDispersed recreation maintenance includes activities to maintain 909,000 acres for general recreation use that occurs outside of developed sites (such as bike riding, horseback riding, and hunting), with 715 miles of trail.

^cRecreation special use maintenance includes activities to maintain the operation of downhill ski areas, recreation residences, lodges, and other recreation facilities.

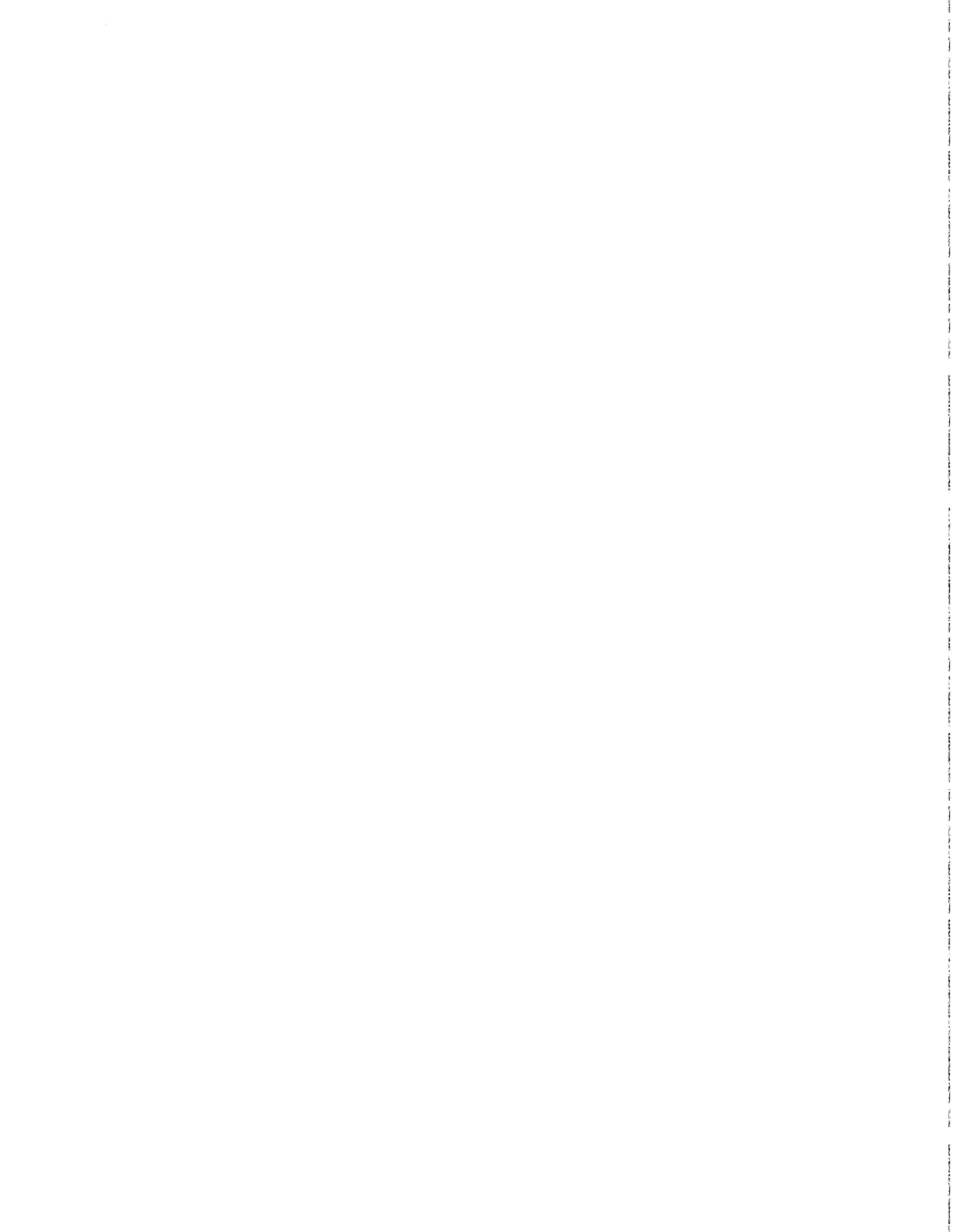
^dWilderness maintenance includes activities to maintain 312,000 acres in 7 wilderness areas in their natural setting through a high level of resource protection and stringent regulation of use (no developed camping or other facilities provided), with 325 miles of trails.

MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS FACT SHEET

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

James Duffus III, Associate Director, (202) 275-7756
Robert E. Allen, Jr., Group Director
Peter M. Bramble, Jr., Evaluator-in-Charge
Tanya Goforth, Typist

(140720)



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