

1872

# YELLOWSTONE

2022

## National Park

WYOMING - MONTANA - IDAHO



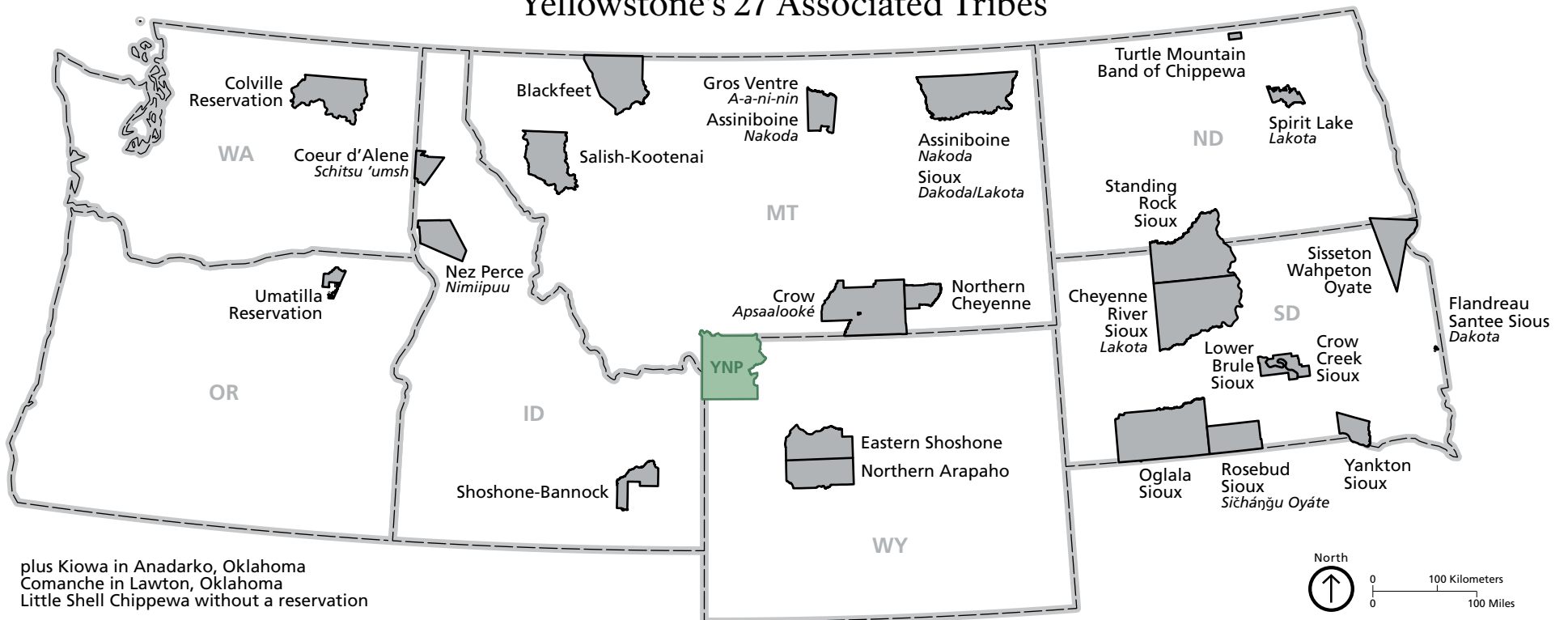
Tales of a vast, mysterious plateau in the Mountain West began to spread across a young United States in the early 1800s. This Yellowstone country was said to have a huge lake with waters as clear as crystal, open fields dotted with cone-shaped mounds holding boiling water, and vents from which sulfur issued forth.

By the late 1860s, formal expeditions to explore Yellowstone were launched, culminating in the 1871 Hayden Expedition. Led by Ferdinand V. Hayden, the survey team included not only scientists from a range of disciplines, but also artists Thomas Moran, Henry W. Elliot, and William Henry Jackson (who painted the image above.)

The wonders of Yellowstone captured the imagination of Congress. On March 1, 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant signed the Yellowstone National Park Protection Act into law. The first US national park was born, and with it, an international movement to protect places for their intrinsic and recreational value. The Act stated "[t]hat

the tract of land in the Territories of Montana and Wyoming, lying near the headwaters of the Yellowstone River [...] is hereby reserved and withdrawn from settlement, occupancy, or sale under the laws of the United States, and dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people."

### Yellowstone's 27 Associated Tribes



Yet the area set apart wasn't a pristine unpeopled wilderness. For at least 11,000 years—long before European Americans had set foot in the region or even North America—Yellowstone was home to a diverse array of cultures, as evidenced by nearly 2,000 documented archeological sites, trails (many still in use), and campsites.

Ancestors to today's 27 associated tribes, whose names and current tribal lands are shown in the map above, traveled trails, visited geysers, conducted ceremonies, hunted, gathered plants and minerals, and engaged in trade. The Tukudika (Sheep Eater), a band of Mountain Shoshone, even lived year-round in what is now the national park.

When Yellowstone National Park was established in 1872, Native Americans were left out of historical accounts and discouraged from entering the park. A band of 800 Nez Perce fled the US Army through the park in 1877 (their flight is commemorated in various areas of the park). Tourism and industry were favored over traditional use.

Now, the park strives to recognize this difficult history and to more fully engage with Tribal Nations to honor and learn from their ancestral connections. Learn more by visiting the Yellowstone Tribal Heritage Center at Old Faithful (see page 14), engaging with park exhibits and brochures, and visiting [go.nps.gov/Yellowstone150](http://go.nps.gov/Yellowstone150).

# Yellowstone: 1872 to 1947

## A Park is Founded

Although the US government saw fit to set aside Yellowstone in 1872, it didn't see fit to set aside any funds for its care.

The park's first superintendent, Nathaniel P. Langford, received no pay, didn't live on site (he visited the park at least twice in his five years as superintendent), and had no money to build basic structures and hire law enforcement rangers.

But in 1878, one year after Philetus W. Norris was appointed the second superintendent, Congress authorized appropriations "to protect, preserve, and improve the Park."

Norris constructed roads, built a park headquarters at Mammoth Hot Springs, hired the first "game-keeper," and campaigned against hunters and vandals. Much of the primitive road system he laid out remains as today's Grand Loop Road. He also actively discouraged Native Americans from visiting the park.

By 1886, it was clear that more resources would be needed to manage and protect the park. The Secretary of the Interior, under authority given by the Congress, called on the Secretary of War for assistance. On August 20, 1886, the US Army took charge of Yellowstone. It strengthened, posted, and enforced regulations in the park. Troops guarded the major attractions and evicted troublemakers. Cavalry patrolled the vast interior for poachers, whose activities threatened to exterminate animals such as the bison.

Today, you can see buildings from and learn about the Army era at Fort Yellowstone in Mammoth Hot Springs (see page 17).



US Army soldiers pose with bison heads taken from notorious poacher Ed Howell, circa 1894.

## Stagecoaches, Trains, Grand Hotels

By the 1890s, more visitors began showing up to the park. Like visitors to this day, they needed transportation, lodging, and food during their visit.

Visitors during this time arrived to the park by train, then transferred to stagecoaches like the one pictured below at the Gardiner Train Depot in 1904.



Since stagecoaches were much slower than modern automobiles, hotels were built approximately a day's stagecoach trip apart. While many early hotels are no longer standing, some of these grand structures still operate today, offering you a taste of the early visitor experience. These include Lake Hotel (opened 1891), the oldest still-operating hotel in Yellowstone; and Old Faithful Inn (opened 1904), an architectural icon of Yellowstone and the American West.

Another significant piece of architecture was built during this time: Roosevelt Arch. Dedicated in 1903 by President Theodore Roosevelt, the arch still proudly stands just outside Gardiner, MT, near the park's North Entrance.



## Autos, National Park Service

After years spent widening and improving roads and bridges to accommodate the recently invented and increasingly popular automobile, the first auto was officially allowed in the park on July 31, 1915.

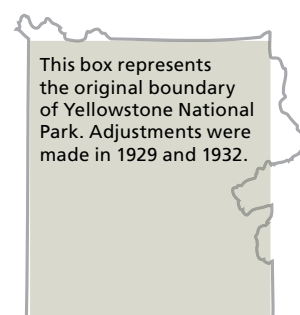


The automobile forever changed the nature of park visitation. General stores and service stations were built to meet the needs of auto travelers. The largest impact can be clearly seen in the chart at bottom: while visiting Yellowstone during the train and stagecoach era was quite expensive and thus mostly limited to the elite, autos made park tourism affordable for a growing segment of the population. Visitation more than doubled the first year that autos were allowed, climbing to over half a million visits per year by 1940.

Another new development that would forever change Yellowstone National Park came just a year later: the creation of the National Park Service (NPS).

Running a park wasn't the Army's usual line of work. While troops could protect the park and ensure access, they couldn't fully satisfy visitors' desire for knowledge. Moreover, each of the 14 other national parks established in the late 1800s and early 1900s was separately administered, resulting in uneven management, inefficiency, and a lack of direction. National parks clearly needed coordinated administration by professionals attuned to the special requirements of these preserves.

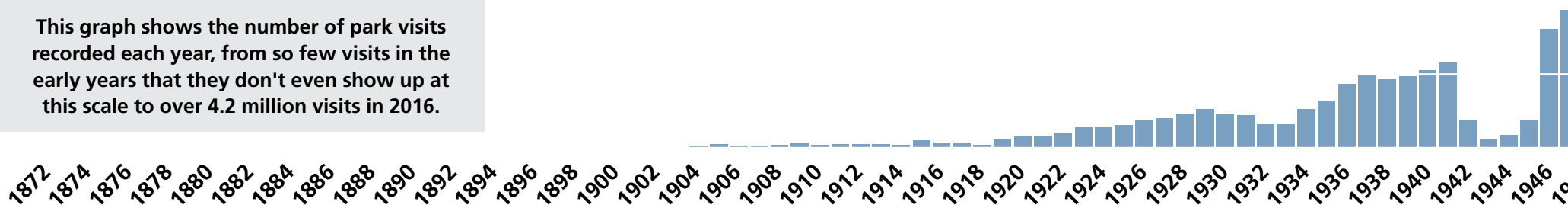
The National Park Service Organic Act was passed by Congress and approved by President Woodrow Wilson on August 25, 1916. This new agency fully took over Yellowstone operations in 1918.



This box represents the original boundary of Yellowstone National Park. Adjustments were made in 1929 and 1932.

The park's boundaries were also adjusted in 1929 and 1932 to conform more closely to natural topographic features, such as the ridgeline of the Absaroka Range along the east boundary.

This graph shows the number of park visits recorded each year, from so few visits in the early years that they don't even show up at this scale to over 4.2 million visits in 2016.



# Yellowstone: 1948 to 2020

## Mission 66, Hebgen Lake Quake

World War II drew away employees, visitors, and money from all national parks, including Yellowstone. Projects were halted, and infrastructure deteriorated. However, visitation jumped as soon as the war ended, with the park recording more than 1 million visits for the first time in 1948. The park wasn't equipped to meet this surging demand.

In 1955, National Park Service Director Conrad Wirth persuaded Congress to fund an improvement program for completion by the NPS's 50th anniversary in 1966. Dubbed "Mission 66," the program focused mainly on visitor facilities and roads. Work in Yellowstone included the development of Canyon Village, the first Mission 66 project initiated by the NPS, which opened in July 1957.



Canyon Village Lodge, 1957

1959 brought a different kind of momentous change to the park: on August 17, a magnitude 7.3 earthquake occurred, with its center just outside the park boundary. The Hebgen Lake earthquake caused an enormous landslide in the Madison Canyon, killing 28 people and trapping many tourists in the canyon overnight. Many roads and buildings were damaged.

The effect of the earthquake on geothermal features was spectacular. By the day after the earthquake, at least 289 springs in the geyser basins of the Firehole River had erupted as geysers; of these, 160 were springs with no previous record of eruption. Geysers and pools throughout the park changed appearance and behavior.

## Ecosystem Management

A growing understanding of ecosystems and the interconnectedness of species led to changes in NPS wildlife management policy. By the early 1970s, many laws were passed to correct the mistakes of the past and help prevent similar mistakes in the future.

One such law was the Endangered Species Act (1973). In 1975, grizzly bears were federally listed in the lower 48 states as a threatened species. By 1978, all wolf subspecies were on the federal list of endangered species for the lower 48 states except Minnesota.



Programs were created to restore both populations. Grizzlies, still present in the Yellowstone region, grew from a population of 136 in 1975 to about 728 in 2020. Wolves, which had been completely eliminated in Yellowstone by 1926, were reintroduced to the park starting in 1995.

The carefully studied recovery of these species has had profound impacts on the Yellowstone ecosystem and visitor experience. Learn more at [go.nps.gov/YELlmammals](http://go.nps.gov/YELlmammals).

The 1988 fires were another reminder of the importance of ecosystem-scale management. An incredible event affecting almost 800,000 acres of the park, the fires created a mosaic of burns, partial burns, and unburned areas. This mosaic now provides natural firebreaks and sustains a great variety of plant and animal species.



## 4 Million Visits... and Beyond

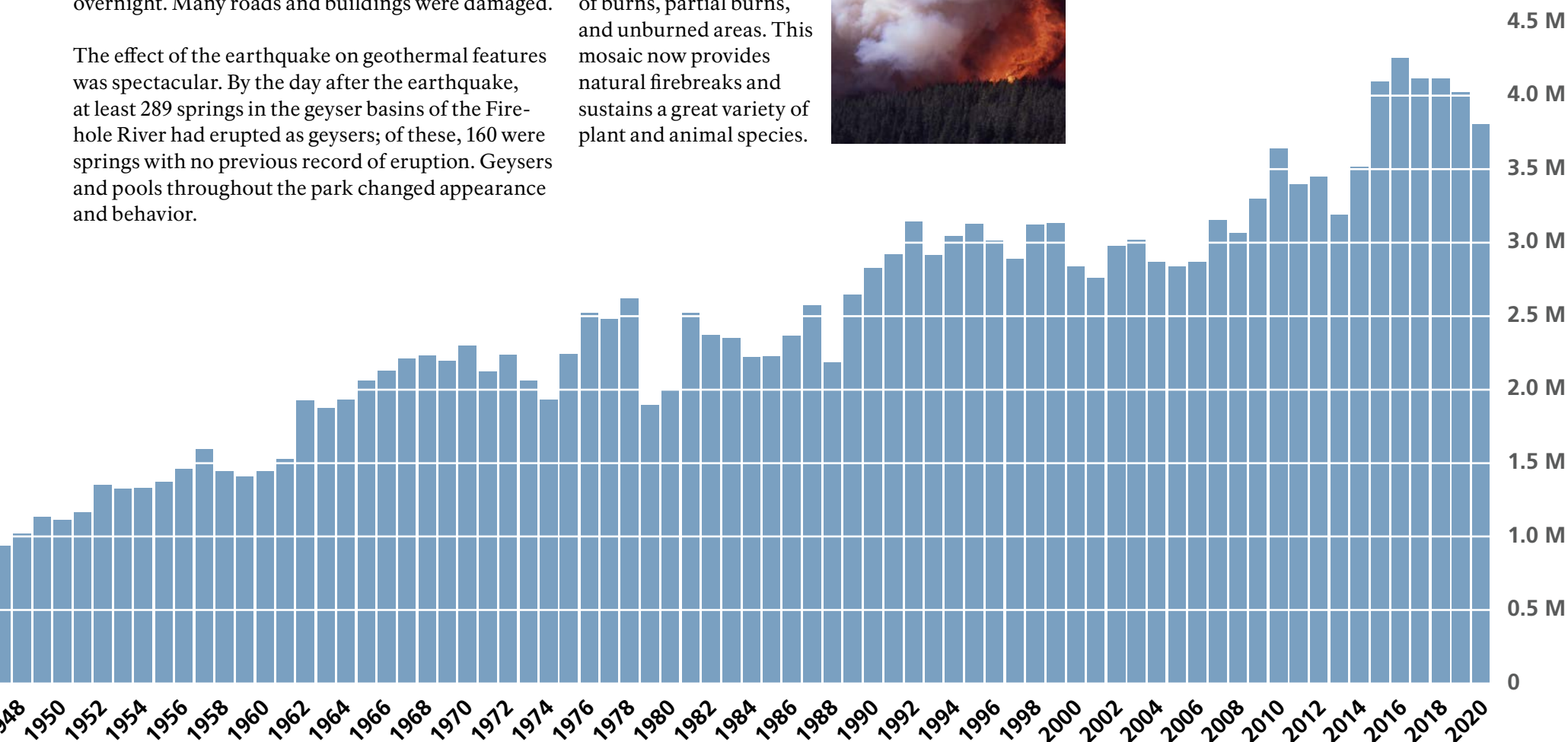
Yellowstone had its first 3 million visit year in 1992. 4 million visits were recorded in 2015, just 13 years later.

While Yellowstone National Park is vast—2.2 million acres (8,980 km<sup>2</sup>)—most visitation is concentrated within roads, buildings, and pullouts, an area covering far less than 1% of the park. And about 70% of visitation occurs from June through August, further concentrating use. As visitation continued to climb during this period, park infrastructure became strained, and crowded trails, roads, and parking lots became more common.



Yet the late 1990s–early 2000s was also a time of deepening understanding of Yellowstone as the core of an even greater region—the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, one of the largest nearly intact natural ecosystems remaining on the planet—and a need to further study, protect, and, when necessary, rehabilitate key components of the ecosystem, from bison populations to native fisheries.

How will park managers respond to these and other challenges as we embark on the next 150 years of Yellowstone? Read on to find out.



# Yellowstone: Today and into the Future

Yellowstone's 150th anniversary is an important moment in time for the world—an opportunity to reflect on the lessons of the past and to strengthen Yellowstone for the future. Park managers' primary goal is to continue making decisions that aim to protect the health of Yellowstone for centuries to come.

The park has developed a visitor use strategy that focuses on preventing and mitigating resource

impacts, understanding and responding to impacts on staffing and infrastructure, improving visitor experience, and working with gateway communities to continue facilitating recreational access and positive economic impacts.

To tackle the challenges of today, Yellowstone has set five major strategic priorities, each supporting the overarching National Park Service (NPS)

mission and each critical to the success of Yellowstone National Park. These priorities are detailed below, and in-depth information is available at [go.nps.gov/YELLstrategic](http://go.nps.gov/YELLstrategic).

You can be proud of the enormous amount of work occurring in America's first national park, none of which can be done without your support. Thank you for caring about and for Yellowstone.

## Focusing on the **CORE**

This priority revolves around improving the working and living conditions of the Yellowstone team, managing financial resources, and working toward the most effective administrative and operating framework for the park.

Major projects in this area include:

- Improving employee housing by replacing trailers with high-quality modular homes; improving non-trailer housing units; rehabilitating deteriorating historic homes at Fort Yellowstone; and increasing housing capacity.
- Improving parkwide communications and connectivity infrastructure.
- Streamlining park operating structure.
- Supporting the Yellowstone team through a variety of operations including an employee health and wellness program.



## Strengthening the Yellowstone Ecosystem and Heritage **RESOURCES**

This goal centers on strengthening, preserving, and protecting Yellowstone's resources. The park is committed to being a world leader in promoting large landscape conservation, understanding and responding to the impacts of climate change, protecting resources from increasing visitor

use, and maintaining a robust scientific and research capacity to inform resource-related decisions.

Areas of focus include:

- Continuing bison research and expanding the Bison Conservation Transfer Program, which transfers brucellosis-free bison to tribal partners.
- Continuing to monitor and support populations of wolves, cougars, grizzly bears, and other key species.
- Suppressing nonnative lake trout in Yellowstone Lake. Restoring streams.
- Preserving historic and cultural resources.



## Delivering a World-Class Visitor **EXPERIENCE**

This priority aims to provide clarity and direction around how the park will handle increased visitation in upcoming years—with special focus on visitor impacts on resources, staffing and infrastructure, visitor experience, and gateway communities.

Projects and goals include:

- Gathering detailed data on visitor use and its impact on resources, operations, visitor experience, and impacts to gateway communities.
- Piloting studies and projects like visitor shuttles, campground reservations, and traffic management.
- Connecting to the public on the web, in social media, in the park, and in the news.
- Protecting people and resources through a wide variety of programs including structural and wildland fire, search and rescue, public safety, and emergency medical services.



## Investing in **INFRASTRUCTURE**

Yellowstone has assets valued at \$3.8 billion, with a deferred maintenance level estimated at over \$700 million. Actions include improving the deferred maintenance reduction plan and taking better advantage of current and future funding to improve asset conditions and protect investments.

Recent projects:

- Tower to Mount Washburn road improvement (\$28 million), reopening this summer.
- 40 new employee housing units opening this year.
- Groundbreaking on projects totaling more than \$125 million this year through the Great American Outdoors Act.
- Pelican Creek Bridge (\$40 million).
- Norris to Golden Gate road improvement (\$30 million).
- Brink of the Upper Falls trail improvement (\$10 million).
- North Entrance station improvement (\$12 million).



## Building Coalitions and **PARTNERSHIPS**

Yellowstone's success is predicated on strong partnerships and coalitions. The park will continue to build and align priorities with Tribal Nations and a wide range of partners, elected officials, environmental and conservation groups, concessioners, communities,

states, other federal cooperators, and the philanthropic community.

Recent developments:

- Multiple Tribal Nations will be present throughout the summer at Old Faithful as part of the Yellowstone Tribal Heritage Center project where tribal members will interact directly with visitors about their cultures and heritage.
- Tribes are also coordinating with Yellowstone to install a large teepee village in the park near the Roosevelt Arch in August.

