



Proposed Investments at New River Gorge National Park

The National Park Service proposes a major investment in infrastructure, facilities, and historic structures in southern West Virginia.

National Park Service

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At New River Gorge National Park and Preserve, a project proposed by the National Park Service would implement major infrastructure improvements, including rehabilitation of water and wastewater systems. These improvements would support increasing park visitation and reduce impacts on the New River watershed, protecting the region's rich ecology and improving environmental quality for the more than 1.5 million people who visit the park each year. (Image

Credit: Gary Hartley/National Park Service)



The proposed project may also include stabilization or rehabilitation of several historic structures at the Thurmond Historic District, including the National Bank of Thurmond and other buildings on historic Commercial Row. (Image Credit:

GWWO/National Park Service)



Important visitor facilities, like the lower picnic shelter at Dun Glen, may also be rehabilitated as part of the proposed project. (Image Credit: GWWO/National Park Service)

Introduction

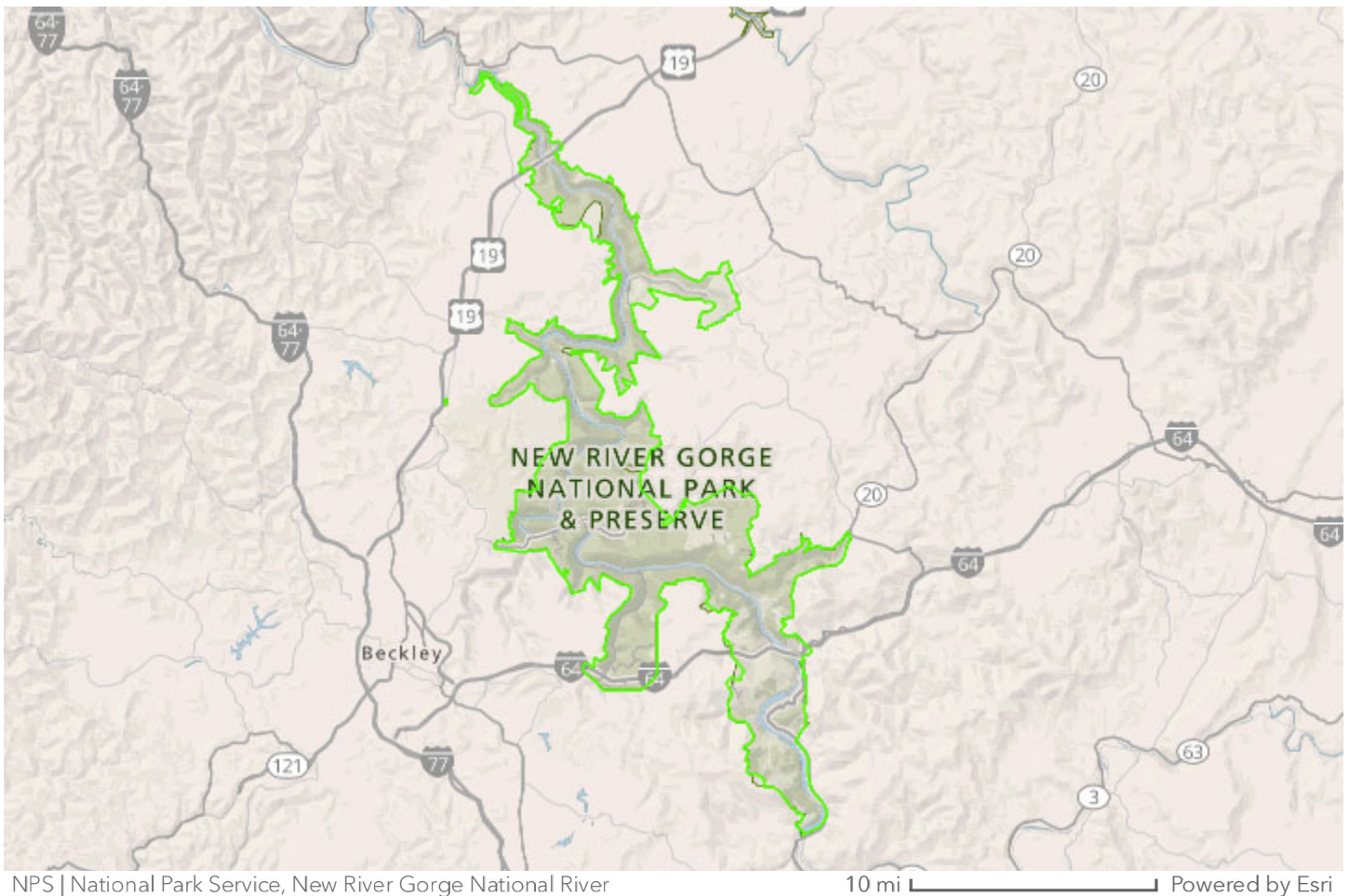
At New River Gorge National Park and Preserve, located in Fayette, Raleigh, and Summers Counties, West Virginia, the National Park Service is proposing a series of investments to upgrade water and wastewater infrastructure, renovate important visitor facilities, stabilize or rehabilitate several historic structures, and demolish other historic and non-historic structures that have become hazardous to visitors and park staff or present limited opportunities for contemporary use.

The proposed investment, funded by the [Great American Outdoors Act's Legacy Restoration Fund](#), would improve visitor experience, reduce environmental impacts to the New River watershed, protect some of the park's most significant cultural resources, and address threats to visitor and staff safety. The proposed project is currently in the planning and design phase, and the scope of work that may ultimately be implemented is subject to change.

This interactive Story Map is intended to share information about the proposed project with interested members of the public. It is organized into six sections: Park Overview, Proposed Project Overview, Project Details, Project Timeline, Interactive Project Map,

and Additional Resources. Please continue to scroll below to proceed sequentially through each section. You may also navigate directly to a specific section by using the navigation menu at the top of the page.

Park Overview



New River Gorge National Park and Preserve encompasses over 70,000 acres along 53 miles of the New River in southern West Virginia.

Opposite: Interactive map displaying the location of New River Gorge National Park and Preserve.



Among the oldest rivers on earth, the New River runs northward through the deepest and longest river gorge in the Appalachian Mountains, offering spectacular scenery and opportunities for water-based recreation, including canoeing, kayaking, and whitewater rafting over imposing rapids.

Opposite: Rafters enjoy a scenic stretch of the New River. (Image Credit: National Park Service)



The waters of the New River support a highly productive aquatic ecosystem that includes distinct populations of native fish, mussels, crayfish, and a broad array of other aquatic life.

Opposite: The New River near Cunard. (Image Credit: Gary Hartley/National Park Service)



The park protects a diverse, globally significant forest ecosystem that provides a refuge for endangered mammals as well as rare birds and amphibians. Beginning at least twelve thousand years ago, this natural diversity supported human society among a vast network of native groups. Today, New River Gorge National Park and Preserve consults with eighteen Federally Recognized Tribal Nations.

Opposite: Two young peregrine falcons take flight at New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. (Image Credit: Gary Hartley/National Park Service)



In addition to canoeing, kayaking, and rafting, visitors to New River Gorge National Park and Preserve find opportunities for hiking, rock climbing, fishing, hunting, bird watching, camping, picnicking, and biking.

Opposite: A young biker rides on a trail along the New River. (Image Credit: Dave Bieri/National Park Service)



Visitors may also experience the New River Gorge's rich cultural history of farming, coal mining, timber harvesting, and railroad development. The park preserves and interprets historic railroad and mining towns, farmsteads, camps, and other features that demonstrate the ways people have influenced the region since the first European colonists began to establish settlements in the 1750s.

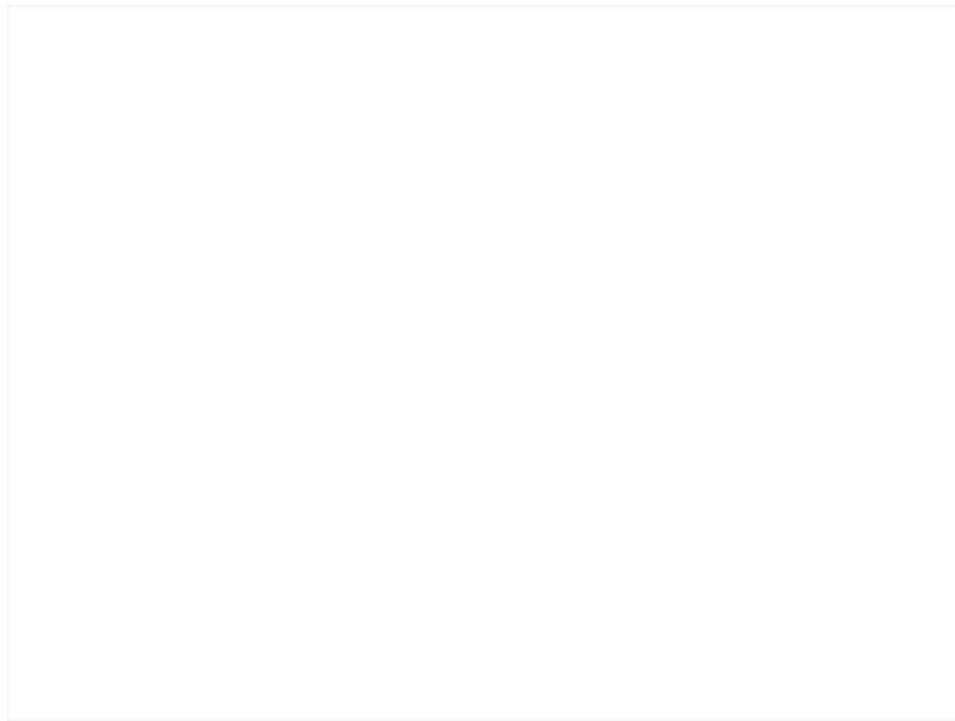
Opposite: The historic railroad town of Thurmond in the late nineteenth century, looking north from the opposite side of the New River. (Image Credit: National Park Service)

Proposed Project Overview

Funded by the Great American Outdoors Act's Legacy Restoration Fund, the National Park Service proposes a major investment at New River Gorge National Park and Preserve to:

- upgrade the park's water and wastewater infrastructure;
- renovate bathrooms, picnic shelters, and other important visitor facilities;
- stabilize or rehabilitate several historic structures; and
- demolish excess historic and non-historic structures.

Water, wastewater, and visitor facility improvements, which are proposed throughout the park, are necessary to support increasing visitation and ensure the continued operation of essential systems. Rehabilitation of wastewater systems would also reduce impacts on the New River watershed, protecting the region's rich ecology and improving environmental quality for the more than 1.5 million people who visit the park each year.

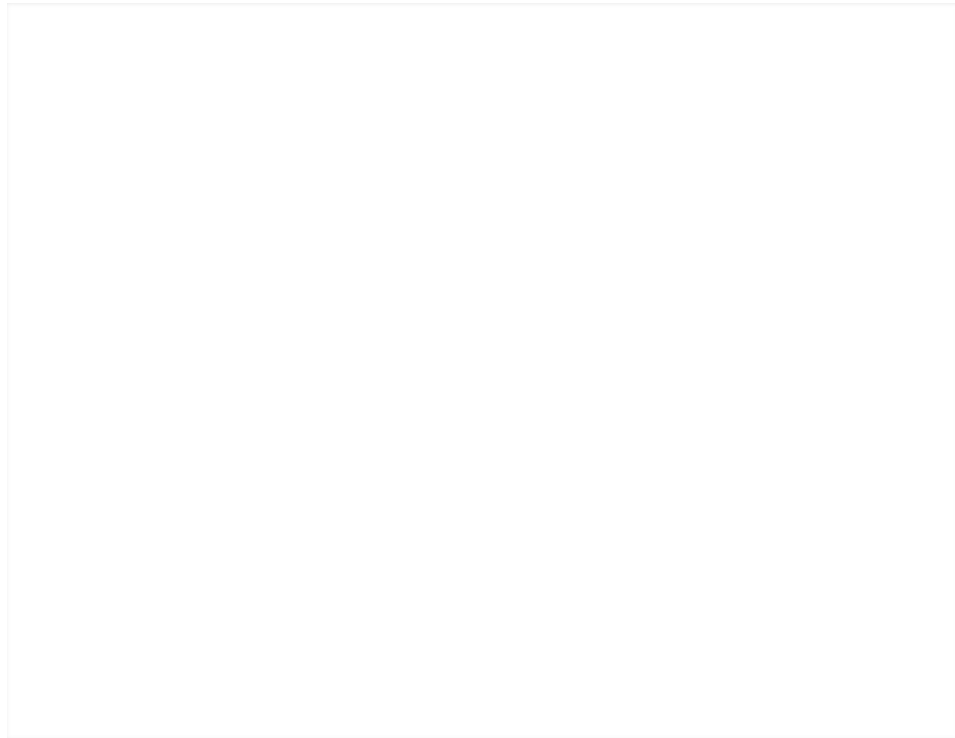


Whitewater rafters paddle through New River rapids at Fayette Station. (Image Credit: National Park Service)

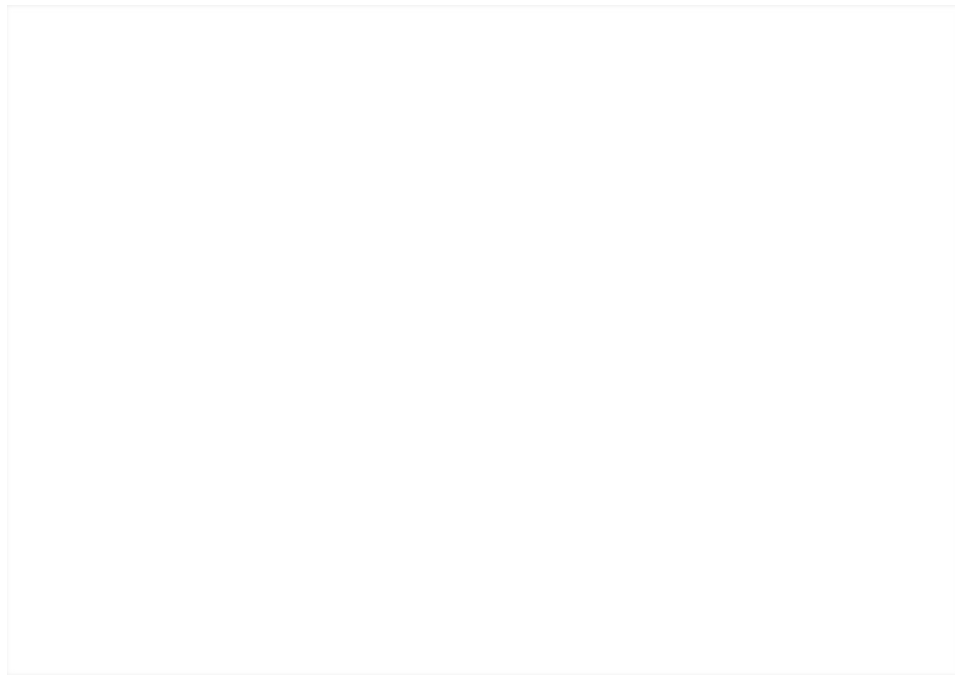
Proposed historic building stabilization and rehabilitation work would primarily be concentrated in Thurmond, the historic railroad town that is a focus of historic interpretation at the park. By the time the National Park Service acquired many of the historic buildings in Thurmond during the 1980s and 1990s, their conditions had substantially deteriorated due to declining use and maintenance over the previous decades.

The currently proposed building stabilization and rehabilitation work would be a continuation of major efforts that the National Park Service has made since the 1990s to preserve historic structures in Thurmond, such as the restoration of the historic Railroad

Passenger Depot in 1995 and the stabilization of Commercial Row in 2002. The currently proposed work would advance the park's broader goal of better interpreting New River Gorge's rich cultural history.



The historic Thurmond Depot in 1982, before the National Park Service restored the building as a visitor center and museum. (Image Credit: National Park Service)

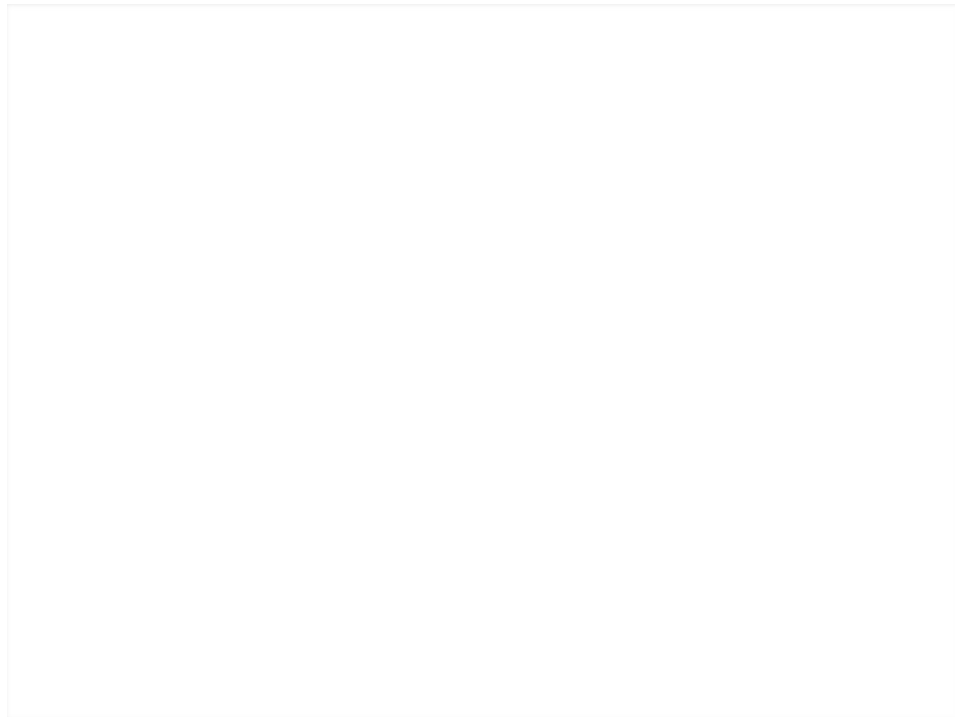


The Thurmond Depot as it appears today, following a National Park Service restoration project in 1995. (Image Credit: Louise McLaughlin/National Park Service)

As part of the proposed work, the park may also demolish several historic structures in Thurmond and nearby Dun Glen that have become hazardous due to continued deterioration, lack of use, and vandalism. The park may also demolish the historic Prince Brothers General Store building, which recently required extensive temporary measures to prevent structural failure and poses a serious risk to public safety. Non-historic structures in deteriorating condition may also be demolished in several areas of the park.

Demolition of select historic and non-historic structures, which present limited opportunities for interpretation and reuse, would allow the park to focus its constrained resources on

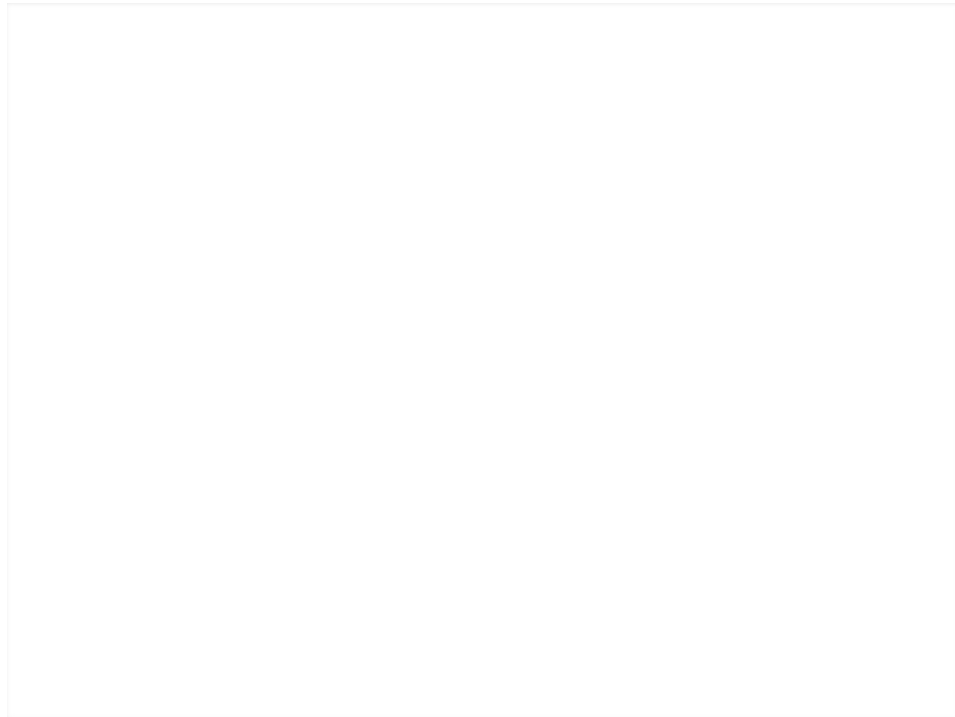
sustainably managing its most significant historic structures and landscapes. The park would continue to advance its goal of better interpreting the region's rich cultural history through the preservation of the many remaining historic structures and new interpretive media.



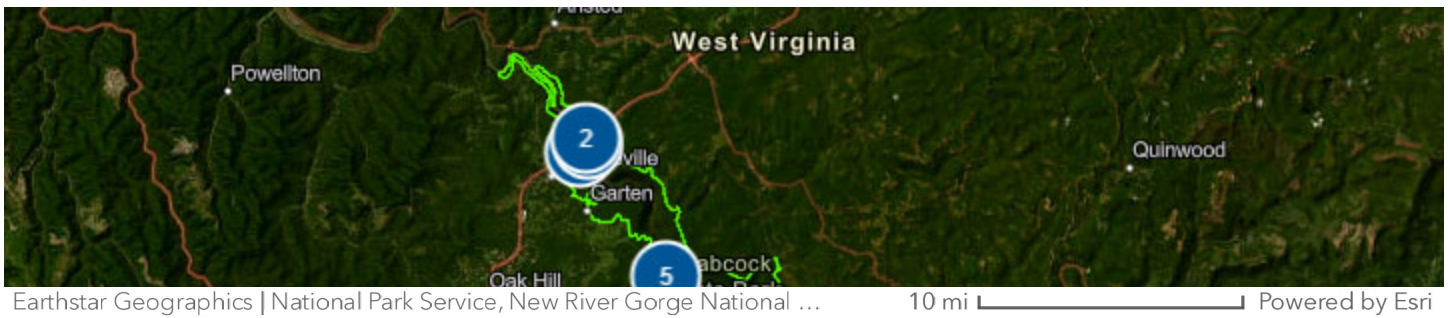
The interior of the Prince Brothers General Store, which recently required extensive temporary measures to avoid a catastrophic structural failure. (Image Credit: VHB/National Park Service)

Wherever excavation may occur as part of the proposed project, extensive archeological research is being professionally conducted to document and preserve any historic artifacts or features that are encountered. Detailed photography, 3-D scanning, and other methods are being used to document historic features that may be affected by the project.

Additionally, consultations are being conducted with participating Tribal Nations and partner organizations to understand perspectives on the potential impacts of the proposed project.



A 3-D scanning device used to document the Prince Brothers General Store, visible to the right, in preparation for the proposed project. (Image Credit: National Park Service)



1 Proposed Project Locations

As part of the investment, work is proposed at areas throughout the park, from Burnwood near the park’s northern end to the Sandstone Visitor Center to the south. Various types of work are proposed within each area, depending on existing facilities, maintenance needs, and operational goals.

Please continue scrolling below for an overview of the work proposed as part of this investment, organized by park location.

Above: The New River Gorge Bridge in fall. (Image Credit: Gary Hartley/National Park Service)

Burnwood sits on a ridge on the east side of New River, adjacent to the New River Gorge Bridge. The site contains a multi-use area and associated facilities, including a boat house, ranger station, picnic shelters, and restrooms. A wastewater treatment plant that serves the multi-use area and the Canyon Rim Visitor Center is located nearby. Proposed work at Burnwood may include improving the existing wastewater facility and renovating an existing park maintenance structure.

Above: Park maintenance structure at Burnwood. (Image Credit: GWWO/National Park Service)



Canyon Rim is located south of Burnwood, also on the east side of the New River, and serves as the primary visitor facility in the northern part of the park. At Canyon Rim, proposed work may include replacing an existing wastewater pump station that serves the visitor center building and directs flow to the treatment facility at Burnwood.

Above: Visitors enjoy the view of the New River Bridge from Canyon Rim. (Image Credit: National Park Service)



Fayette Station, on the western shore of the New River, is the primary river exit point for rafters who begin their journey upriver at Cunard. The National Park Service maintains a visitor restroom and parking area at this location. As part of the project proposal, the restroom may be renovated and new drainage features may be added to reduce the risk of damage from flooding, which is common in this area. A new accessible parking space may also be created.

Above: Restroom facility at Fayette Station. (Image Credit: GWWO/National Park Service)

At Cunard, located on the New River's western bank, the National Park Service maintains a visitor restroom, parking area, and river launch where many rafters begin their journey. Similar to Fayette Station, proposed work at Cunard may include renovation of the existing restroom facility and site drainage improvements to protect the building from flooding.

Above: Rafters prepare to launch rafts at Cunard. (Image Credit: National Park Service)

6

Thurmond

Thurmond is a historic railroad town located on the eastern side of New River, wedged between an active railroad along the river's bank and a steep mountainside to the east. At Thurmond, the National Park Service proposes to stabilize and rehabilitate some of the most significant historic structures, including three buildings on Commercial Row and three houses, while improving drainage to prevent continued damage from flooding and stormwater runoff. The proposed project may also include water and wastewater system improvements and the demolition of several historic structures that are structurally unsound and are hazardous for

visitors and park staff. These actions would facilitate the park's long-term sustainable management and interpretation of the Thurmond historic district.

Above: Thurmond's Historic Commercial Row. (Image Credit: Louise McLaughlin/National Park Service)

7

Dun Glen

Dun Glen sits on the western bank of New River, directly across from Thurmond. The site offers several visitor facilities, including restrooms, a parking area, a boat launch, and large picnic shelters that are frequently used by visiting school groups, family reunions, and other events attended by park visitors, local residents, and park staff. Proposed work at Dun Glen may include site modifications to improve accessibility and visitor experience as well as rehabilitation of the visitor restrooms, picnic shelters, water treatment, and septic systems to improve safety and reliability. Additionally, four historic or potentially historic structures that present limited opportunities for reuse may be demolished.

Above: Restroom facility at Dun Glen. (Image Credit: GWWO/National Park Service)

8

Prince Brothers General Store

The Prince Brothers General Store is a historic building that sits along the railroad in the historic town of Prince, on the eastern side of the New River. The building housed a store that was operated by the Prince family from the late 1890s until 1950, when they sold the store to the Monk family. The Monk family operated the store until it

closed in 1984. The building, which sits in an unsafe location at the edge of a busy roadway, recently experienced structural failure of the rear wall due to malfunctioning gutters and water infiltration. The park may demolish the historic building, which poses a major safety hazard in its location and current condition.

Above: The Prince Brothers General Store. (Image Credit: National Park Service)

9

Grandview

Grandview, named for its iconic view of New River Gorge, is located on the western side of New River. Originally designed as a state park, Grandview was built during the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps. As the site of several trail heads, multiple picnic shelters, and restrooms, Grandview receives many seasonal visitors and is incredibly popular year-round with local communities. It is also home to an outdoor amphitheater used by a local community theater organization. At Grandview, proposed improvements may include rehabilitation of existing restroom facilities and wastewater system upgrades to enhance capacity and reliability.

Above: A view from the Main Overlook at Grandview. (Image Credit: National Park Service)

10

Sandstone

Sandstone contains the visitor center for the southern portion of the park, located on the eastern side of New River. At Sandstone, the National Park Service proposes to rehabilitate the existing drinking water well, water tower, and treatment system that serves the visitor center to ensure continued reliability and effectiveness.

Above: Sandstone Visitor Center. (Image Credit: National Park Service)

11

Camp Brookside

Camp Brookside is a historic youth summer camp located approximately 3.5 miles south of Sandstone, on the eastern side of the New River. Originally constructed in 1948 as the summer camp for the children of Elkem Metals employees, the camp is operated by the park today as an environmental education center. Existing historic structures include cabins, a dining hall, and administrative buildings. As part of the proposed project, the National Park Service may demolish the historic Camp Brookside Pool Chemical Treatment Building.

Above: Summer activities at Camp Brookside. (Image Credit: National Park Service)

12

Vallandingham House



The Vallandingham House sits in a residential area on the western side of New River, approximately five miles south of Sandstone. The historic log cabin, constructed in ca. 1890, has a non-historic brick and wood frame addition. The proposed project may demolish the structure's non-historic addition and paved driveway while preserving the historic nineteenth century section in order to enhance the building's historic character.

Above: The historic section of the Vallandingham House, which will be preserved.
(Image Credit: VHB/National Park Service)

Proposed Project Details

This section provides more detailed information about the proposed investments at New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. Information is organized by the four major categories of proposed work:

- Water, Wastewater, and Septic System Improvements;
- Visitor Facility Improvements;
- Historic Building Stabilization and Rehabilitation; and,
- Excess Historic and Non-Historic Building Removal.

Water, Wastewater, and Septic System Improvements

Proposed improvements to water, wastewater, and septic systems throughout the park are intended to adapt systems to increasing visitation, replace outdated components, and ensure long-term system reliability. This work would support visitor experience and park operations, while also protecting the New River watershed.

Use the interactive map below to review more detailed information about proposed water and wastewater system improvements at each park location.

Water, Wastewater, and Septic System Improvements – Interactive Project Map

Visitor Facility Improvements

Proposed visitor facility improvements at New River Gorge National Park and Preserve are aimed at ensuring visitor safety and comfort in the context of increasing visitation while addressing long-term deferred maintenance needs.

Use the interactive map below to review more detailed information about proposed visitor facility improvements at each park location.

Visitor Facility Improvements – Interactive Project Map

Historic Building Stabilization and Rehabilitation

Proposed stabilization and rehabilitation of historic buildings at New River Gorge National Park and Preserve is intended to preserve some of the park's most significant historic resources. Proposed stabilization and rehabilitation work would primarily be concentrated in Thurmond, the historic railroad and mining town that is a center for historic interpretation at the park. Outside of Thurmond, the demolition of a non-historic addition to the Vallandigham House would rehabilitate the building's historic appearance.

Use the interactive map below to review more detailed information about proposed historic building stabilization and rehabilitation at each park location.

Historic Building Stabilization and Rehabilitation – Interactive Project Map

Excess Building Demolition

Proposed demolition of excess buildings, some of which are historic, is intended to ensure safety of visitors and park staff, while allowing the park to focus its limited resources on the preservation and management of its most significant historic structures and landscapes.

Use the interactive map below to review more detailed information about proposed excess building removal at each park location.

Excess Building Removal – Interactive Project Map

Project Timeline

This section provides a high-level overview of the anticipated timeline for the proposed project at New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. This proposed project, like most National Park Service construction projects, is organized into three distinct phases: the Predesign Phase, the Design Phase, and the Construction Phase.

Throughout the three phases, compliance activities ensure the project's adherence to laws and regulations protecting natural and cultural resources, such as the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act.

As of August 2024, the project is in the Design Phase. This section will be updated to document progress and milestones as the project continues to advance.



Predesign Phase: 2023–2024

The Predesign Phase consists of various planning activities to inform the goals and requirements of the project, including site surveys, archeological investigations, project scoping exercises, consultations, and technical assessments.

Design Phase: 2024–2026

The Design Phase consists of three subphases: Schematic Design, Design Development, and Construction Documentation. Within each subphase, the project designers work closely with the National Park Service and various technical experts to ensure that the design will achieve the project goals and meet the needs of visitors and park management.

Construction Phase: 2026–2028

During the Construction Phase, the final project design will be implemented by specialized contractors qualified to perform the specified work on historic buildings, structures, and landscapes at New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. Throughout this phase, the National Park Service and its partners will closely monitor construction progress to ensure work is performed in accordance with the design documents and that historic resources are protected.

Additional Resources

Follow the links listed below to learn more about New River Gorge National Park and Preserve, the Great American Outdoors Act, and the buildings, structures, and landscapes that may be included in this project.

Websites

[New River Gorge National Park & Preserve \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](#)

[Great American Outdoors Act \(GAOA\) - Infrastructure \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](#)

Reports

[DataStore - Thurmond Historic District: Cultural Landscape Inventory, New River Gorge National River, National Park Service \(nps.gov\)](#)

[DataStore - Cultural Landscape Report - Grandview \(nps.gov\)](#)

[DataStore - Historic Structure Report: Thurmond Passenger Depot and Offices \(nps.gov\)](#)

[DataStore - Historic Structure Report: Thurmond Commercial Buildings, New River Gorge National River, WV \(nps.gov\)](#)

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