



National Park Service

Vanishing Treasures Initiative: Ruins Preservation in the American Southwest

The Vanishing Treasures Initiative was established in FY 1998 to provide funding to reduce threats to prehistoric and historic sites and structures in 44 parks of the Intermountain Region. In 2002, the program was expanded to include three parks in the Pacific West Region. The goal is to overcome backlogged preservation work by bringing sites and structures to a condition in which they will be preserved by routine maintenance activities. In addition, the intent is to increase NPS expertise and capability for maintaining these sites and structures.

Three primary thrusts define the Vanishing Treasures Initiative. First, the initiative seeks to eliminate resource loss by addressing emergency project needs where structures are in immediate, imminent danger from natural erosive factors or the cumulative pressures of visitation. Secondly, it focuses on replacement of an aging workforce that has unique craft skills that will be lost unless these people can mentor new, younger workers before they retire. Third, throughout its life span, the initiative strives to move to a proactive preservation program in which structures would be evaluated and ranked for treatment priority, and the best preservation options selected. As outlined in the “Vanishing Treasures Strategic Plan,” the program is led by a Management Team which defines policy, ensures program consistency and accountability, and provides overall program coordination.

The goals of the “Vanishing Treasures Strategic Plan” include developing a standardized system to measure inventory, condition assessment, and accomplishments; formulating a workforce augmentation and replacement plan; seeking appropriate avenues for providing adequate and consistent funding and other support; and establishing guidelines for consistency in strategy and technical application, and defining the ruins preservation process. Since the program’s inception, 29 parks have received base funding increases to hire and train skilled preservation staff. Approximately 1/3 of the funds have been used for emergency projects and program management.

Vanishing Treasures Initiative Funding
(Dollars in Thousands)

