



Coalition To Protect America's National Parks Weekly National Park System Report

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Incidents

Yellowstone NP Searchers Find Body Of Missing Visitor

On Friday, June 9th, park search crews found the body of an Illinois man who failed to return from a day hike he took on Wednesday on Rescue Creek Trail near the park's North Entrance. Jeff Murphy, 53, evidently died in a fall from Turkey Pen Peak.

The park began looking for Murphy when his wife reported him missing on Thursday. At its peak, the search involved eight hiking teams, five dog teams, four horse teams, and a helicopter.

The Rescue Creek Trail, which had been closed due to this search, has reopened.

Source: [Press Release](#), Morgan Warthin, Yellowstone NP.

Dinosaur NM Rafters Dies In Accident On Green River

A 60-year-old Denver man died this past Saturday while on a commercial rafting trip down the Green River.

The park got a call around 3 p.m. reporting that CPR was being performed on a client with Sheri Griffith Expeditions, an authorized river rafting company out of Moab, Utah.

The man, who has not been identified pending notification of next of kin, was in a two-person inflatable kayak that flipped in Winnie's Rapid, causing him to go into the water. Winnie's Rapid is a Class II rapid located in Canyon of Ladore in Moffatt County.

According to witnesses, the man, who was on a multiday trip, gave a signal that he was OK as he floated downstream. However, before he was pulled from the water, he showed signs of distress and lost consciousness.

A medical helicopter was able to land and the man was taken to Memorial Hospital in Craig, where he was pronounced dead. It's believed he had some sort of cardiac event.

Source: [News Story](#), Fox 31 Denver.

Zion NP Hiker Falls While Descending Lady Mountain

A hiker descending Lady Mountain on the morning of June 6th slipped near the summit and fell approximately one hundred feet into a narrow rock ravine. A friend who witnessed the fall reported the accident to park dispatch.

Park medics responded immediately, but the climb to reach the victim took almost two hours. Once on scene, the medics conducted an evaluation while a technical rescue team ascended to their location.

The injured hiker was then lowered 135 feet to an area accessible to the helicopter and flown to Dixie Regional Medical Center.

Source: [Press Release](#), John Marciano, Zion NP.

Cape Hatteras NS Body Of Missing Swimmer Found

Park staff found the body of a teenager just east of ORV ramp 48 in Frisco early on the morning of Wednesday, June 7th.

The body has been identified as that of a 17-year-old boy from Thailand who'd been reported missing the previous day after his boogie board was found washed up on shore near ramp 49.

Throughout Tuesday afternoon and night, the Coast Guard, Hatteras Island Rescue Squad, Dare County Sheriff's Office, and National Park Service conducted searches on land and with helicopters, boats, and jet skis.

Source: [Press Release](#), Boone Vandzura, Cape Hatteras NS.

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center Headline

NIFC remains at Preparedness Level 2.

Large fire activity continues in the Southwest, where 10 fires have burned more than 34,000 acres. Nearly 3,800 firefighters and support personnel are assigned to wildfires in seven states. Fifteen uncontained large fires were burning as of Tuesday, but none were in NPS areas. Two Type 1 and four Type 2 teams are in the field.

Comparative figures:

- 2017 year-to-date fires – 26,589
- 2006-2016 average year-to-date fires – 28,653
- 2017 year-to-date acres – 2,417,483
- 2006-2016 average year-to-date acres – 1,452,924

Source: NIFC Situation Report, plus individual park press releases.

Natural and Cultural Resources

Channel Islands NP Ancient Native American Site Discovered

NPS archeologists discovered a significant ancient Native American site while conducting archeological monitoring during a rehabilitation project of the historic Main Ranch House on Santa Rosa Island. They found artifacts characteristic of ancient Paleocoastal sites that were occupied by the first islanders on the northern Channel Islands between 8,000 and 13,000 years ago.

Scientists now believe that ancient sites from this period may be evidence of a coastal migration following the North Pacific Rim from Northeast Asia into the Americas, part of the peopling of the new world.

The ancient site was discovered under the Main Ranch House, part of the historic Vail & Vicker Ranch at Bechers Bay, while workers were in the process of lifting the building to construct a new foundation.

“The northern Channel Islands have one of the largest and most significant clusters of early coastal sites in the Americas with more than 100 sites over 7,500 years old,” said Jon Erlandson, University of Oregon Archeologist and leading expert on Paleocoastal archaeology. “We suspect the site is at least 10,000 years old, with evidence of some of the earliest people on the West Coast, the first Americans.”

Among the artifacts uncovered were two types of stone tools that are distinctly representative of early North American Paleoindians – Channel Islands barbed points and crescents. Made from local island chert and used for hunting and fishing, they are signatures of a sophisticated technology of early tool making on the Channel Islands.

The early settlement sites on the Channel Islands produced several milestones in archaeology including the earliest evidence for seafaring and island colonization in North America, the oldest shell middens in North America, and the earliest basketry from the Pacific Coast of North America.

Santa Rosa Island is also the location of the discovery of Arlington Man, the oldest known human remains found in North America, dating to about over 13,000 years ago.

Part of the ancestral homeland of the Island Chumash, many contemporary Chumash families trace their heritage to Santa Rosa Island. There were up to 1,200 Chumash living there in at least nine known historic Chumash village sites, including Hichimin, which was located near the historic main ranch complex.

Following this discovery, work on the ranch rehabilitation project was suspended to conduct an archaeological investigation. An NPS archaeological team, in consultation with the Chumash, is conducting careful test excavations in the vicinity of the ranch house to determine the nature, extent, and integrity of the deposits.

The NPS is consulting with tribal and preservation partners to monitor this work, to discuss management of the site, and to assess the results of the test excavations in order to determine the best course of action.

Source: [Press Release](#), Yvonne Menard, Channel Islands NP.

News From Around Washington

Reports from Capitol Hill, the White House, the Department of the Interior, the National Park Service and other related agencies and NGO's.

Senate Subcommittee On National Parks CPANP Testifies At Hearing On Improving NPS Workplace

On June 7th, the Senate Subcommittee on National Parks, a subcommittee of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, held an oversight hearing entitled, "Moving into a Second Century of Service: Working to Improve the National Park Service Workplace Environment."

Mike Reynolds, acting director of the National Park Service, Maria Burks, executive council member of the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks, and Mary Kendall, inspector general for the Department of the Interior, were the witnesses. The hearing was a follow-up to reports of sexual harassment and a hostile work environment in the National Park Service, but focused mainly on ways to improve the workplace.

"[It] is only through the dedication of over 23,000 employees and 400,000 volunteers that the National Park Service is able to ensure that these special places are enjoyed by the public throughout the year," said Burks. "This dedication to the mission of the National Park Service by its employees is reflected annually in surveys of the public expressing high satisfaction with our national parks and their visits to them. It also is reflected in employee surveys that show employees of the service are proud of their work and are deeply committed to its mission.

"As with any large organization with so many employees in places throughout the country – many in remote locations – you will find individuals who make poor decisions and engage in misconduct. These situations need to be addressed promptly and decisively. However, these instances should not overshadow the work performed every day, year in and year out, by the vast majority of the service's employees as they welcome visitors, manage and interpret the resources being protected in each of our parks, and carry out the programs Congress established to protect our nation's natural and cultural heritage."

She then offered recommendations on making improvements in several areas:

- Adequate funding from Congress
- Improved central and regional office oversight
- Increasing the number of HR specialists supporting parks
- Elimination of unnecessary administrative requests and paperwork
- Improved employee recognition
- Increased funding for training in general and for managers in particular
- Increased funding for travel
- Equal treatment of employees

For Maria's full testimony, which details and amplifies all these points, click on [this link](#).

A webcast of the hearing and the testimony of the other two witnesses can be found at [this link](#).

Source: Don Hellmann, Member, CPANP.

House Of Representatives Hearing Held On DOI FY 18 Budget

On June 8th, the House Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations held a hearing on the FY 18 budget for the Department of the Interior, including the budget for the National Park Service. Secretary Zinke was the witness for the hearing.

Secretary Zinke's testimony can be read at [this link](#). A webcast of the hearing and the testimony of other witnesses can be found at [this link](#).

This may be the only hearing on the National Park Service budget for FY 18.

Source: Don Hellmann, Member, CPANP.

Department of the Interior DOI Expands Programs To Prevent Drone Incursions Over Wildfires

The Department of the Interior announced last week that it is expanding and enhancing its wildfire location data-sharing program for 2017. The new service being offered is called "Current Wildland Fires" and is accessible through the Geoplatform ArcGIS Online Organization.

"By providing greater public access to a wider array of wildland fire location data, drone operators will 'Know Where Not To Go' in near real-time," said Mark Bathrick, director of Interior's Office of Aviation Services. "As the 2017 wildland fire season gets underway, this improved service should greatly reduce the incidents of drone incursions on wildfires and enhance the safety of our firefighters and the communities they work so hard to protect."

The 2017 program provides location data on any wildland fire reported in the last eight days, compared to last year, when the service only offered information on wildfires reported within the previous 72 hours. The 2016 program included wildland fires reported by Interior, the U.S. Forest Service, and two states (Alaska and Texas). This year's program includes the addition of Wyoming, North Dakota, and Los Angeles County, California.

On average, more than 73,000 wildfires are reported across the United States each year. About 98 percent of these fires are contained within the first 24 hours, before incident managers request the Federal Aviation Administration to issue a Temporary Flight Restriction. That meant that most of these fires were never plotted on dynamic aeronautical maps or available to drone operators before Interior launched its 2016 initiative to make fire location data available to commercial mapping services that support drone operations.

The wildfire location data-sharing initiative addresses a growing problem of private drone incursions over wildland fires. From 2014 to 2015, the number of intrusions over or near wildfires increased from two to more than twelve. In 2016, there were 42 reported drone incursions on wildfires. Fire suppression aviators were forced to take evasive actions to avoid disastrous collisions with drones on several occasions. Twelve incidents of drone intrusions forced fire suppression managers to either delay or cease aerial support to firefighters, placing their lives and the communities they strive to protect, in greater danger.

To use the new expanded service, drone operators can create an account on the GeoPlatform ArcGIS Online Organization at <https://idp.geoplatform.gov/registeruser.html>. After the account is created go to <https://geoplatform.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html> and sign in using the GeoPlatform.gov account, then search for the group "Current Wildland Fires" and request to "Join this group" to gain access to wildland fire location data.

For more information a visit the Department's Office of Aviation Services at www.doi.gov/aviation or download the User Guide pdf document. More information on wildland fire available @DOIWildlandFire.

Source: [Press Release](#), Department of the Interior.

Park People, Friends and Allies

Indiana Dunes NL

Passing Of Retired Superintendent Dale Engquist

The second superintendent of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, Dale Engquist, 77, died on Sunday, June 4th, in Michigan City. He retired in February 2007.

Dale spent 24 of his 40 years with the National Park Service at the park, beginning as assistant superintendent in 1978. He became superintendent in 1983.

"I was with Dale and (his wife) Jo Ann Saturday night for the Shirley Heinze Land Trust's annual fundraiser; and when I heard the news the next day, it just knocked the legs out from under me," said his successor and friend of approximately 25 years, current superintendent Paul Labovitz. "My job is better and more special and more fun because of the time and hard work Dale put in for more than three decades of his life."

"When Dale started here, the park was somewhat brand new from the perspective of acquiring land and developing the park's infrastructure," he added. "Even after he retired, he was always available to answer any questions I had, and his perspective was always value added. He was involved for decades with everything that is important in this park."

Dale was born and raised in Chicago. He attended the University of Illinois at both the Navy Pier and Champaign/Urbana campuses and went on to earn a master's degree in botany with a minor in zoology.

After grad school, Dale planned to pursue his doctorate at the University of California, but a summer job as a park ranger at Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota changed his dream.

"We were married two years (at the time) and discovering all these wonderful things in life," said his wife Jo Ann. "Dale discovered he could botanize, and was really focused on prairies. He realized he could do this in the park service. He could save things, help people recreate, help them understand the importance of saving the environment."

Dale's first permanent position was at the National Capital Parks in Washington, D.C. He went on to become the chief park naturalist at Hot Springs National Park in Arkansas, assistant chief naturalist at the Everglades National Park in Florida, superintendent at Biscayne National Monument in Florida, and manager at the Sandy Hook unit of Gateway National Recreation Area in New Jersey. He also led a cooperative program between the National Park Service and the National Parks of Poland beginning in 1977, a year before he moved to the Michigan City area.

Dale's accolades included the Park Planning and Design Award for excellence in park design, and the Richard G. Lugar Award for recognition as an outstanding federal employee in Indiana in 1987; Superintendent of the Year and Resource Stewardship Award in 1991; Sagamore of the Wabash in 1992; Meritorious Service Award by then-Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt in 1995; National Park Service's 75th Anniversary Director's Award; Polish Cavalry Cross of Merit; and the Chicago Wilderness Excellence in Conservation Award.

Details on services have not yet been announced.

Source: [Michigan City News-Dispatch](#), submitted by member Dennis Burnett.

Scripps Institution of Oceanography Pioneering Scuba Diver James Stewart Dies

James Stewart, 89, who taught generations of rangers to dive at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego, died on June 7th.

Stewart had been a longtime breath-hold or free diver when he first took up scuba. In 1952, he joined Scripps as a volunteer and later became chief diving officer. He helped develop diving safety procedures and trained thousands of underwater researchers.

Over five decades, Stewart dove all over the world. He also consulted for NASA, the FBI, Army Special Forces and the National Park Service and developed diver training for the Antarctic, where a mountain is named after him.

For additional details, see the article below.

Source: [Los Angeles Times](#).

Other News And Notes

Systemwide National Park Service In The News

A selection of additional recent news stories pertaining either directly or indirectly to the operation of the National Park Service:

- **Yosemite NP** – A number of publications have run stories on the “perfect climb” of El Capitan by Alex Honnold on June 3rd. One of the best is in the June 9th edition of *The New Yorker*. Honnold “climbed the cliff alone and without a rope or protective equipment of any kind,” writes J.B. McKinnon. “Had he fallen, he would have died... The achievement had long been predicted but never quite accepted as possible.” [Full story](#).
- **Systemwide** – The *Flathead Beacon* reports in its June 13th edition that Secretary Zinke “has invited private entities to play a larger role in managing National Park Service campsites, a move [he] says could help relieve a sizable burden from a federal agency chafing under the constraints of a lean budget.” According to the paper, this proposal “has rankled conservation groups who worry the shift could diminish public access and render park rangers’ jobs obsolete, while the recreation industry says the move will improve the overall visitor experience.” [Full story](#).

Systemwide Upcoming Events

Upcoming events and activities of potential interest to members of the Coalition:

- **July 10** – Due date for comments in DOI review of all national monuments but Bears Ears NM. [More](#).
- **August 4** – The Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s Maine 2017 Conference will be held in Waterville, Maine, on the week of August 4th. [More](#).

- **August 3-4** – Along with the above, an Art and Land Conservation Symposium will be held on August 3rd and 4th at Colby College in Waterville, Maine.
- **October 18-22** – Ranger Rendezvous 40, Association of National Park Rangers, YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park, Colorado. [More](#).

A Closing Observation

"If we are going to succeed in preserving the greatness of the national parks, they must be held inviolate. They represent the last stand of primitive America. If we are going to whittle away at them we should recognize, at the very beginning, that all such whittlings are cumulative and that the end result will be mediocrity. Greatness will be gone."

[Newton B. Drury](#), Director, 1940-1951

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The *Weekly National Park System Report* is a publication of The Coalition To Protect America's National Parks. It is prepared by Coalition member Bill Halainen, former editor of the *NPS Morning Report*, and produced and disseminated by Coalition staffer Susannah Albert-Chandhok. Tips on and links to park-related stories are appreciated; please send to Bill at BHalainen@gmail.com.

The Coalition is a non-profit organization of past and current NPS employees and their allies that "studies, educates, speaks, and acts for the preservation and protection of the National Park System and mission-related programs of the National Park Service."

To receive a copy of this free publication, join the coalition. Any current, retired or former salaried (GS, wage grade, seasonal, temporary, or SES) employee of the National Park Service can join the Coalition. For more information, click on [this link](#).

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