



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

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Incidents

Gulf Islands NS Park Prepares For Arrival Of Tropical Storm Cindy

As of late yesterday, Tropical Storm Cindy was about 250 miles south of Louisiana. Although relatively stationary at the time, the storm was expected to approach the coast of southwest Louisiana late Wednesday or Wednesday night, and move inland over western Louisiana and eastern Texas on Thursday.

Wind and surge will be issues, but the biggest problem may well be rainfall. Cindy is expected to produce total rain accumulations of 6 to 9 inches with isolated maximum amounts of 12 inches over southeastern Louisiana, southern Mississippi, southern Alabama, and the Florida Panhandle through Thursday. Rainfall amounts of 3 to 5 inches with isolated maximum amounts of 6 inches can be expected farther west across southwest Louisiana into southeast Texas through Thursday.

The park accordingly closed the Fort Pickens Area in Florida on Monday evening at 8:00 pm. All visitors who were in the area were told to leave. A mandatory evacuation of the Fort Pickens Campground was to begin at 9:00 a.m. yesterday. The Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, and the Perdido Key Areas remain open at this time, but their status may change with conditions.

In Mississippi, the park has closed East and West Ship, Horn, Cat, Petit Bois and West Petit Bois Islands to all public use due to the potential of tropical conditions. All visitors currently at the islands were being instructed to leave. The park's Davis Bayou Area and campground remained open, but the status of both areas may change with conditions.

Park status updates will be posted online at www.nps.gov/GulfIslands, [www.Facebook.com/GulfIslandsNPS](https://www.facebook.com/GulfIslandsNPS), and [www.Twitter.com/GulfIslandsNPS](https://www.twitter.com/GulfIslandsNPS). Gulf Islands National Seashore will reopen after the storm has passed and the staff has had an opportunity to mitigate any hazards resulting from the storm.

Source: [News Release](#), Brent Everitt, Gulf Islands NS.

Grand Canyon NP Search Underway For Missing Hiker

A search is underway for a 72-year-old hiker who's been missing inside the park since last week.

Search efforts continue for Raafat "Ralph" Nasser-Eddin of Los Angeles, California, and Lebanon. As of last Thursday, four ground teams of ten people were in the field and aerial searches were being conducted by the park helicopter. Search efforts were focusing on drainages between the Bright Angel and Boucher trails. Steep, hazardous terrain characterizes much of the search area and high temperatures are reported above the century mark.

On the evening of Tuesday, June 13th, park dispatch received a call reporting Nasser-Eddin overdue. He'd last been seen at Hermit Camp on the Hermit Trail on the morning of June 11th. A ranger hiked the Hermit Trail on June 11th and 12th, but was unable to find him.

Nasser-Eddin is described as 5'10" tall, weighing 170 pounds, with gray hair and green eyes. He was last seen carrying a reusable shopping bag, a gallon jug of water, and wearing a black and white ball cap, a green plaid shirt, and khaki shorts. Nasser-Eddin had reservations to stay at Phantom Ranch.

Any individual with information on the location of Raafat "Ralph" Nasser-Eddin should call the National Park Service Investigative Services Branch Tipline at 888-653-0009, text 202-379-4761, or email the park.

Source: [News Release](#), Emily Davis, Grand Canyon NP.

Yellowstone NP Concession Employee Severely Burned In Fall Into Hot Spring

Gervais Gatete, 21, of Raleigh, North Carolina, sustained severe burns after falling into a hot spring late on Tuesday, June 13th. The incident occurred in the Lower Geyser Basin off of Fountain Flat Drive just north of the Old Faithful area. Gatete, currently an employee with Xanterra Parks and Resorts, was with seven other people when he fell.

Members of the group attempted to evacuate Gatete by car. Just before midnight, they flagged down a ranger near Seven Mile Bridge on the West Entrance Road. Park staff provided immediate medical assistance and transported Gatete via ambulance to the airport in West Yellowstone. From there, he was flown to a hospital.

Since rangers were not at the scene of the incident, it is not yet clear exactly where and how it occurred. Investigations continue.

This was the first serious injury in a thermal area this year. Last June, a man left the boardwalk and died after slipping into a hot spring in Norris Geyser Basin. In August 2000, one person died and two people received severe burns from falling into a hot spring in the Lower Geyser Basin.

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

Denali NP Nepalese Climber Dies Of Medical Issue On West Buttress Route

A ranger patrol on Denali responded to a request for help at 17,500 feet on the West Buttress route around 1 a.m. on June 16th.

An independent party of three had been descending from Denali Pass when one of the teammates – Sanjay Pandit, 28, of Kathmandu, Nepal – collapsed due to an unknown illness. By the time the initial team of two NPS mountaineering volunteers reached the scene, Pandit was unresponsive. Despite emergency medical interventions, he never regained consciousness and was pronounced dead.

Pandit's remains will be recovered from the 17,200-foot high camp when weather conditions allow.

Source: [News Release](#), Maureen Gualtieri, Denali NP&P.

Yellowstone NP Kayaking Guide Dies While Attempting To Rescue Client

Timothy Conant, a 23-year-old kayaking guide from Salt Lake City, Utah, died while attempting to rescue a client who capsized in the West Thumb area on Yellowstone Lake on Wednesday, June 14th. The kayaking group consisted of nine clients and three guides.

After receiving a call through the park's dispatch center, rangers responded to the scene in a patrol boat and found Conant in the water. They brought him on board and immediately started CPR while in route back to the dock. CPR continued as Conant was transported to the nearby helipad at Grant Village via ambulance. A Life Flight helicopter landed to assist, but Conant was pronounced dead before taking off.

The client who Conant attempted to save was rescued by other guides in the group and brought to shore before rangers arrived on scene. The client was transported to the park clinic and treated for hypothermia. The incident remains under investigation.

Conant worked as a guide for Oars, a company based out of Angel Camp, California. Oars has offered non-motorized boat tours in Yellowstone under a permit since 1996. This was his first season working for Oars as a guide.

Since 1894, there have been 41 deaths in Yellowstone Lake. The most recent was in 1997, when two people died while canoeing.

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

Big Bend NP Hiker Dies On Park Trail; Heat Stress Deemed A Likely Factor

On the morning of Sunday, June 18th, a couple headed out for a hike on Dog Canyon Trail. Around noon, both began exhibiting signs of heat distress and dehydration.

The woman's hiking partner was able to hike back to the trailhead and notify the park of the situation around 2:30 p.m. An interagency response was begun that included both rangers and Border Patrol agents. The 46-year-old woman's body was found about two hours later.

While heat stress is a likely factor, a cause of death is yet to be determined. The summer months at Big Bend can have very high temperatures, with shade temperatures reported at 110 degrees in that area of the park. This, combined with the remote terrain, can make the lower desert a difficult environment. During the heat of the summer, the park recommends completing any desert hiking within the early morning hours.

Source: [Press Release](#), Jennette Jurado, Big Bend NP.

Zion NP

Rangers Respond To Three Simultaneous SAR Incidents

Three separate search and rescue operations were conducted simultaneously in the park last Tuesday and Wednesday.

On Tuesday night, rangers received a report of a visitor who had fallen from a tree and injured his ankle on the Wildcat Canyon Trail three miles from his vehicle. Park medics responded and provided medical care throughout the night. A SAR team carried the man back to the trailhead the following morning.

While the SAR team was carrying the injured hiker back to the Wildcat Canyon trailhead, dispatch received a call reporting that a man on the West Rim Trail (Angel's Landing access trail) was experiencing shortness of breath and needed medical attention. Park EMTs responded. As the EMTs were hiking to the patient's location, an interpretive ranger on scene reported that the man had collapsed and that CPR was in progress. A park medic, additional EMTs, Springdale medics and a rescue team were also dispatched to the West Rim Trail. Park and Springdale EMS personnel continued CPR, attempting to resuscitate the man, but were unsuccessful. The National Park Service and the Washington County Sheriff's Office are investigating the fatality.

During the emergency on the West Rim Trail, dispatch learned that another man was complaining of chest pain and difficulty breathing on the Emerald Pools Trail. A different park medic and rescue team responded and provided care. The man was carried by litter to the trailhead and then transported by Life Flight to Dixie Regional Medical Center, where he is recovering.

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

Yosemite NP

El Portal Road Reopens Following Clearance Of Rockfall

A major rockfall that occurred around noon on June 12th led to the closure of the El Portal Road and Arch Rock Entrance. The rockfall was reported inside the park boundary about two miles east of the park line in El Portal. There were no reported injuries or damage to traveling vehicles.

Park road crews have been working to clear the road and repair damage to it ever since. The road reopened on Sunday, June 18th.

Visitors driving through the damaged section of the road are being advised to follow all road signs and drive with caution. The damaged section of road has been repaired with gravel and there may be dirt and debris in the roadway.

Source: [News Release](#), Yosemite NP.

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center Southwest Area Jumps To PL 5

NIFC remains at Preparedness Level 2.

Although the national preparedness level remains at PL 2, the Southwest Area is at PL 5, with 10 large fires that have so far burned more than 41,000 acres. Firefighters contained three

large fires in Utah and are making progress toward management goals on the wildfires in Arizona and New Mexico.

No large fires are burning in National Park Service areas.

Category	2017 YTD Total	2006-2016 YTD Ave	2017 Variance
Year-to-Date Fires	27,578	29,975	- 2,397
Year-to-Date Acres	2,540,723	1,590,972	+ 949,751

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

Natural and Cultural Resources

Nothing this issue.

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.

Department of the Interior Zinke Moving Dozens Of Senior Interior Officials In Shake-up

On June 16th, the *Washington Post* ran a story under the above headline by Juliet Eilperin and Lisa Rein. Here are the first two paragraphs:

“Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke is reassigning top career officials within his ranks, a shake-up that appears to be the start of a broad reorganization of a department that manages one-fifth of all land within the United States.

“The decision to move members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) is only legally permitted after a political appointee has been in office for 120 days; Zinke won't reach that mark until June 28. But the letters that three dozen or more Interior officials got Thursday night — one of which was obtained by The Washington Post — provides them with 15 days notice of their job change. The notice means their reassignments could take place at the earliest date that's legally permissible.”

You can read the entire story at the link below.

Source: [News Story](#), *Washington Post*.

Park People, Friends and Allies

Cape Hatteras NS Dave Frum Has Retired

Dave Frum recently motored his small boat to Portsmouth Island for the last time. On May 23rd, he retired as the National Park Service's part-time maintenance man for the last 28 years.

His solitary stewardship of the abandoned village has been a labor of love. Like many islanders, taking care of Portsmouth was his second job in addition to his work at Ocracoke's water plant.

Frum's work over these many years did not go unnoticed. At the Friends of Portsmouth Island spring meeting in May at the NCCAT facility, he was presented an award for his dedicated service.

Frum was the first to see the damage Hurricane Isabel did to the village in 2003 and wrote a feature of it in this newspaper back then. The eye of that powerful storm passed over Ocracoke Inlet.

"It was devastating," he said. "Trees were down everywhere, the dock was torn up and there was lots of damage to several houses including those of Henry Piggott and George Dixon, and the Life-saving Station,"

The next year, Hurricane Alex hit with major flooding from the Pamlico Sound causing even more destruction.

"With those two storms, I spent a lot of time clearing brush and doing repairs," he said. As Portsmouth is part of the national seashore, no chemical control for mosquitoes is done on any Park Service Land and he does not use mosquito spray.

So, in spite of the village's notoriety for mosquitoes, Frum has the non-chemical solution. "The best deterrent to handling mosquitoes is to ignore them," he said laughing. "Unlike what many believe, they are not horrible all the time."

Frum takes exception to Portsmouth's description as a ghost town. "Ghost town implies that the village is dead which it is not," he said. "It's vibrant. I feel the spirit of the village's past like no other place."

On Portsmouth and often the only person present, he hears the distant roar of the Atlantic Ocean at times as well as the silence while communing with nature.

"I've loved every bit of it," he said. "Every day I witnessed the wildlife, like Great Horned Owls raising their young in a tree in the village, otters playing in the creeks and the Indigo Buntings passing through in the spring. "

Source: *Ocracoke Observer*. [Full story](#).

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:

- **Denali NP&P** – The park has posted a great new 21-minute-long video on its sled dog teams to the web. The video, entitled "The True Heart of Winter," was created as an update to the 1999 "Winter Patrol" movie featuring Denali's sled dogs. [Full story and video](#).
- **Katahdin Woods and Waters NM** – The *Portland Press Herald* ran a story on June 15th entitled "Interior Secretary Sees Potential For Other Uses Of Katahdin National Monument." Secretary Zinke, speaking at a meeting in Maine, said that "that federal ownership of Maine's Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument is 'settled,'" but

“also touted opportunities for more public access and ‘traditional uses’ – including timber harvesting – on the federal land...” [Full story](#). Submitted by member Duncan Morrow.

- **National Parks** – *The Hill*, a publication that covers developments on Capitol Hill in Washington, has posted an opinion piece entitled “National Parks Have More To Offer Than Gas — Why Won’t The Government Protect Them?” The gist of the piece can be found in this paragraph: “We are at a key moment in the evolution of public lands. There was a time when cheap energy was the best way to attract business investment, but in the 21st century attracting and retaining residents and employees is what keeps economies healthy.”

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 – including Bears Ears NM. DOI posted a [news release](#) on June 15th announcing the extension, which means that reviews on all national monuments now conclude at the same time. [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

"Most of the people who visit the parks, whether they realize it or not or whether they put it into words, are impelled to visit them because of the quest for a supreme experience. The gleam of glaciers on a mighty mountain; the shimmering beauty of a lake indescribably blue, resting in the crater of an extinct volcano; the thunder and mist of water falling over sculptured granite cliffs; the colorful chapter in the Book of Time revealed by the strata of a mile high canyon gashed by a rushing river; the sight of strange new plants and animals living in natural adaptation to their environment and to each other; the roar of surf waging its eternal battle with the land; the silence that hangs over the ruins of the habitations of forgotten peoples; the lengthening shadows of the towering sequoias – these and a thousand other vivid impressions are at the heart of the experience that national park visitors travel many miles to seek. All else that they do or that we do in the national parks is incidental. If we can remember this, we can remain true to our high calling as trustees for the greater things of America."

[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.”

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