



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

Wednesday, July 19, 2017

Volume 1

Number 15

Incidents

Glen Canyon NRA

One Killed, Four Critically Injured In Houseboat Explosion

An explosion occurred on a privately owned houseboat that was anchored on shore in Crystal Springs Canyon around 10 p.m. on Wednesday, July 12th. Crystal Springs Canyon is located two canyons north of Halls Crossing.

Kirsten Meyer, 52, of Castle Rock, Colorado, was killed in the blast; four other people sustained critical injuries – burns, broken bones and facial injuries – and were flown to hospitals in Salt Lake City and Grand Junction. A juvenile who received minor injuries was taken by boat to the Bullfrog Clinic, where he was treated and released.

Twenty other people were associated with this boating group. The cause of the explosion is under investigation. It was reported that the explosion occurred as efforts were being made to start a generator on the houseboat.

Assisting at the scene of the accident were National Park Service personnel from Bullfrog and Halls Crossing, personnel from the San Juan County Sheriff's Office, and the San Juan County Sheriff's Office medical examiner. The latter is investigating the death; an autopsy will be conducted.

The San Juan County Sheriff's Office is working with the National Park Service in the investigation of the explosion.

Source: [News release](#), Glen Canyon NRA.

Hawaii Volcanoes NP

Man Dies In 250-Foot Fall Into Caldera

On Saturday, July 8th, two visitors discovered a backpack on Crater Rim Trail at approximately 7 p.m. and notified park dispatch. Rangers searched the caldera rim and floor on foot, but were unable to locate its owner. The search was suspended due to unsafe conditions at night and resumed the next morning. Rangers aboard a helicopter soon found the victim about 250 feet below the caldera rim in an area that is not currently erupting.

The body has been identified as that of a 38-year-old California man. A note was found in his backpack, but details concerning the note and circumstances of the death will not be publicly revealed until the National Park Service has concluded its investigation and a pathologist has ruled on the cause of death.

Source: [News release](#), Hawaii Volcanoes NP.

Mount Rainier NP Skier Falls To Death In Crevasse On Emmons Glacier

The park's search and rescue crews responded to a report Sunday that a skier had fallen into a crevasse on the Emmons Glacier near the 12,800 foot elevation. Upon descending into the crevasse, rangers found the skier, who showed no signs of life.

Earlier that day, a party of three summited Mount Rainier and were descending when one of the member of the group skied into the crevasse. The park was notified through a 911 call; its exclusive-use Astar B3 helicopter picked up six climbing rangers and inserted them at the summit due to erratic winds and steep terrain at the accident site. From the summit, they climbed down to the location of the accident. Using rope rescue techniques, rangers descended approximately 150 feet into the crevasse, where they found that the skier had suffered traumatic injuries and was unresponsive.

Six rescuers raised him to the surface of the glacier, where he was then transported by helicopter from that site and released to the Pierce County Medical Examiner's Office. Rangers descended with the remaining two members of the group to Camp Schurman, where they spent the night.

Park search and rescue crews, aviation personnel, and Mount Rescue Association volunteers participated in the response.

Source: [News release](#), Mount Rainier NP.

Grand Teton NP NPS Joins Manhunt For Suspected Murderer

Rangers have joined with officers from other local, state and federal agencies in a major manhunt for a man wanted in connection with a triple homicide. His car was found parked in a remote campground in the Bridger-Teton National Forest near its border with Grand Teton National Park.

The man – Gerald Bullinger, 60, of Caldwell, Idaho – has been the subject of a nationwide manhunt for nearly a month, ever since the bodies of two women and a teenage girl were found hidden in a shed at his house in Caldwell. All three had been shot to death.

The Canyon County Sheriff's Office reports that evidence suggests that the Ford Focus had been at the campground about three weeks before a law enforcement officer found it. The Teton County Sheriff's Office, National Park Service, US Forest Service, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Teton County Emergency Management, and FBI are currently searching the area for Bullinger.

Bullinger is considered armed and dangerous; anyone who spots him is asked to contact law enforcement immediately.

Source: [News story](#), KTVB.com, Idaho, via member Mike Warren.

Dinosaur NM Kayaker Dies After Capsizing In Teepee Rapid.

A 66-year-old man died this past Saturday while on a two-person private trip using inflatable kayaks on the Yampa River.

The kayaker hit a rock in Teepee Rapid around 2 p.m., capsized, and never resurfaced. He was wearing a personal flotation device. The reporting party kayaked 24 miles downstream to Hells Canyon Ranch to report the incident. Park staff were contacted just before 9 p.m. on Saturday evening. Search and rescue efforts were begun on Sunday morning.

Due to the remote location of the incident and low water levels along the Yampa River, rangers used a helicopter to aid in the response. A contracted helicopter from PJ Helicopters of Red Bluff, California, and the Mesa Verde National Park helitack crew were already onsite in the park for a wildland fire assignment.

The kayaker's body was located approximately three miles downstream from the point last seen late on Sunday morning. It was recovered from the river and transported to the Moffat County coroner. The Moffat County Sheriff's Department is a partner in the investigation.

Source: [News release](#), Dinosaur NM.

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center Fire Activity Remains High Throughout West

Forty-two large fires are currently active nationwide; together, they have burned more than 867,000 acres in 12 states. Sixteen incident management teams were in the field – five Type 1 and eleven Type 2. A total of 12,030 firefighters and overhead personnel were committed.

No large fires are burning in National Park Service areas.

The 2017 fire season continues to be characterized by fewer but larger fires:

Category	2017 YTD Total	2006-2016 YTD Ave	2017 Variance
Year-to-Date Fires	34,586	37,638	- 3,052
Year-to-Date Acres	4,371,963	2,158,747	+ 2,213, 216

Source: NIFC Situation Report.

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. Prepared by members Don Hellmann, former assistant director, legislative and congressional affairs for the National Park Service, and Bill Halainen, newsletter editor.

United States Senate

On July 11th, the nomination of Susan Combs of Texas to be Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget at the Department of the Interior, was submitted to the Senate.

United States House of Representatives

On July 11th, the House passed, under suspension of the rules, the following bills. The bill passed by a vote of 401-15.

- H.R. 702, the Federal Employee Anti-Discrimination Act, to require the head of each agency's EEO program to report directly to the head of the agency, to require better tracking of disciplinary action taken as a result of a discrimination complaint and to require that action and the reasons for the action be placed in the employee's personnel file, and to bar agencies from using non-disclosure agreements to restrict federal employees from reporting waste, fraud, abuse, or a violation of a law or regulation to Congress, the Inspector General, and the Office of Special Counsel, among other provisions. This legislation is the result of harassment and retaliation complaints within the National Park Service and other federal agencies;
- H.R. 954, to remove the use restrictions on a parcel of land transferred to Rockingham County, Virginia under the Federal Lands to Parks Program to allow its continued use as a day care center;
- H.R. 1397, to authorize a land exchange between the George Washington Memorial Parkway and the Turner-Fairbank Highway Research Center of the Federal Highway Administration to allow better access to the center;
- H.R. 1541, to modify the boundary of the Fort Scott National Historic Site, KS, to include the Lunette Blair blockhouse, and to authorize its acquisition by donation; and
- H.R. 1719, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to acquire approximately 44 acres of land in Martinez, CA, for inclusion in the John Muir National Historic Site.

On July 12th, the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies approved for full committee consideration the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, FY 2018, without amendment. As reported by the subcommittee, the bill includes \$2.9 billion in funding for the National Park Service, a reduction of \$64 million from the FY 2017 level, most of which is in land acquisition. However, the \$2.9 billion is \$350 million above the \$2.55 billion requested by the Trump Administration.

The \$2.9 billion total amount is broken down as follows:

- \$2.4 billion for Operation of the Park System (the administration requested \$2.2 billion);
- \$59.6 million for National Recreation and Preservation Programs (the administration requested \$37 million);
- \$74.4 million for Historic Preservation Programs, including \$4 million for Save America's Treasures, \$10.5 million for competitive grants to preserve Civil Rights sites and stories, and \$3 million for grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (the administration requested \$51.1);
- \$219.8 million for Construction (the administration requested \$226.5 million);
- \$120.575 million for Land Acquisition, of which \$79 million is for State Grants under the Land and Water Conservation Fund, \$10 million for the American Battlefield Protection grants, and the remaining \$31.5 million for federal land acquisition (the administration requested \$26.4 million);
- \$15 million for Centennial Challenge projects and programs (the administration requested a similar amount).

The bill also includes the following:

- Sec. 115 prohibits the use of funds for listing the Trestles Historic District, San Diego County, CA, on the National Register of Historic Places,
- Provides \$1.6 million for the Dwight Eisenhower Memorial Commission, and \$15 million for design and construction of the memorial;
- Provides \$1 million for the Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission;
- Provides \$3 million for the World War I Centennial Commission;
- Sec. 416 extends the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act for another year;
- Sec. 422 extends the Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act of 1998 by another two years through FY 2019; and
- Sec. 427 prohibits the use of funds to destroy any buildings or structures on Midway Island that have been recommended by the U.S. Navy for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

On July 14th, the House passed, by a vote of 344 to 81, H.R. 2810, the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2018. Among other provisions, the following of interest to the National Park Service were included in the bill (note that in addition to the provisions below, several amendments to H.R. 3810, were adopted during House floor debate, but their text in the final bill was unavailable by the time of this report; any involving the NPS not listed below will be reported once the text becomes available):

- Sec. 1038, to authorize the Secretary of Defense to transfer funds to the World War I Centennial Commission to assist in carrying out activities related to the Centennial, with the restriction that none of the funds may be used for the designation, establishment or enhancement of a memorial or commemorative work by the commission;
- Sec. 1070, to honor those who died during World War I, those who served in World War I, and to call upon all Americans to participate in activities to commemorate the centennial of World War I;
- Sec. 2851-2855, to amend the boundary of Shiloh National Military Park to include Fallen Timbers, Russell House, and Davis Bridge Battlefields; and to establish the Parker’s Crossroads Battlefield in TN as an affiliated area of the National Park System

On July 14th, the House Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing on four bills, including H.R. 873, to authorize the Global War on Terrorism Memorial Foundation to establish the National Global War on Terrorism Memorial in the District of Columbia to commemorate and honor the members of the Armed Forces who served on active duty in support of the Global War on Terrorism. The Department of the Interior did not have a witness testify on this bill.

On July 19th, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources’ Subcommittee on National Parks will hold a legislative hearing on 12 national park and program bills. Bob Vogel, acting deputy director for operations, NPS, will be the witness.

On July 20th, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources will consider the nominations of Susan Combs of Texas to be the assistant secretary of the interior, policy, management and budget; and the nomination of Douglas Domenech of Virginia to be the assistant secretary of the interior for insular affairs.

Washington Office

Congressionally Mandated Senior Pass Price To Go Up On August 28th

In order to meet requirements set by legislation passed by Congress last December, the price of the America the Beautiful – National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Senior Pass will increase in cost from \$10 to \$80. The change will take effect on August 28th. The fee increase

will support critical investments in maintenance projects at national parks and federal recreational lands nationwide.

The Senior Pass has cost \$10 since 1994. Until August 28th, U.S. citizens and permanent residents who are 62 or older can purchase the lifetime Senior Pass for \$10. Previously purchased lifetime Golden Age or Senior Passes will be honored for the lifetime of the pass holder.

The pass can be purchased for \$10 before August 28th at a national park or other federal recreation area that charges an entrance or standard amenity (day use) fee. It can also be obtained by mail or on line for \$10 before August 28th, but there will be an additional \$10 charge for processing. Due to expected high order volume, there could be delays with online and mail order processing of up to several months.

The legislation requires that the price of the lifetime Senior Pass be the same as the Interagency Annual Pass, which is currently \$80. The legislation also introduces a new annual Senior Pass that can be purchased for \$20. Seniors who purchase annual Senior Passes for four years can trade them in for a lifetime Senior Pass at no additional charge.

The Senior Pass covers all entrance fees and standard amenity (day use) fees and may provide senior discounts for things such as tours or campsites. The pass also waives the entrance fee for travelling companions. At per-vehicle fee sites, the pass admits the pass holder and all passengers in a noncommercial vehicle. At a per-person fee site, the pass admits the pass holder and three other adults. Children under 16 are always admitted free.

Source: [News release](#), Washington Office.

Park People, Friends and Allies

Washington Office

New AD For Workforce And Inclusion Selected

Tony Nguyen has been selected as the Service's associate director for workforce and inclusion. In this role, he will lead all staffing and employee management programs for a workforce of more than 22,000 employees who serve in more than 400 national parks and offices around the nation. Nguyen began his duties on July 10th.

Nguyen came to the National Park Service from the Department of Energy, where he was the director of the Office of Human Capital Strategy and Analysis. Throughout his fifteen years of federal civil service, Nguyen has led major programs at the agency and government-wide levels to implement and improve strategic planning and performance management; workforce analysis, planning, and metrics; recruitment and hiring; diversity and inclusion; employee engagement; and human resources service delivery.

He also recently completed a one-year SES rotation to the Executive Office of the President in the Office of Management and Budget's Performance and Personnel Management Division. Tony began his federal service with the Peace Corps in 2002 as a program analyst for volunteer recruitment.

Nguyen will lead all workforce programs for the National Park Service including staffing, compensation, benefits, employee and labor relations, employee performance management, learning and development, and youth programs.

Source: [News release](#), Washington Office.

Other News And Notes

Systemwide

National Park Service In The News

A selection of additional recent NPS news releases and public news stories pertaining either directly or indirectly to the operation of the National Park Service. Thanks to members Dick Martin, Dennis Burnett and Cathy Halainen for sending along articles.

- **National Monuments** – The July 11th edition of the *Huffington Post* has a story entitled “Senators To Trump: Hands Off America’s National Monuments.” It reports on a July 10th event in which six Democratic senators joined conservation and public lands advocates outside the Capitol “to warn the Trump administration against stripping protections for America’s national monuments.” Said Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA): “I guarantee you, somewhere, Teddy Roosevelt is rolling over in his grave.” [Full story](#).
- **National Monuments** – The website for the Center for Western Priorities ran an article on July 10th, the last day of the comment period on national monuments, which contains some preliminary stats on the trend of comments: “New analysis finds near-unanimous support of Bears Ears and other national monuments as public comment period closes, including a 9-to-1 margin among Utahns.” [Full story](#).
- **Death Valley National Park** – The “California Journal” feature section in the July 12th *Los Angeles Times* has an article on the 135-mile-long Badwater Ultramarathon, which runs through the park, then crosses three mountain ranges, passes through Lone Pine, and ends up at Whitney Portal high in the Sierras. The rule book for the race was developed with the park, “which had threatened to revoke the race permit over safety issues...” [Full story](#).
- **Yosemite National Park** – The July 10th *Fresno Bee* has an editorial on the huge traffic backups encountered when attempting to enter the park in the summer (two hours just to get past the entrance, then more delays in the Valley) that argues that something needs to be done about it: “It’s time for the Park Service to set reasonable limits on the number of vehicles allowed in Yosemite Valley on any given day.” [Full story](#).

Systemwide

Upcoming Events

Upcoming events and activities of potential interest to members of the Coalition, including relevant House and Senate hearings:

- **July 31 – September 1** – House and Senate in recess.
- **August 24** – ANPR is now accepting applications for Bill Supernaugh Memorial Scholarships, which allow early-career employees, NPS volunteers, and students to experience the annual Ranger Rendezvous and learn about ANPR. The closing date for submissions is August 24th. [More information](#).
- **October 18-22** – Ranger Rendezvous 40, Association of National Park Rangers, YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park, Colorado. Online registration is now open at [this link](#).

A Closing Observation

"The places of scenic beauty [in a country] do not increase, but, on the contrary, are in danger of being reduced in number and diminished in quality, and the danger is always increasing with the accumulation of wealth, owing to the desire of private persons to appropriate these places. There is no better service we can render to the masses of the people than to set about and preserve for them wide spaces of fine scenery for their delight...we are heirs of those who have gone before, and charged with the duty we owe to those who come after, and there is no duty which seems clearer than that of handing on to them undiminished facilities for the enjoyment of some of the best gifts that the Creator has bestowed upon his children."

[James Bryce](#), British Ambassador to the United States in the early 1900s.

* * * * *

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.

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](#).

--- ### ---