



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

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Editor's Note

Tips on potential stories and/or links to articles of topical relevance to the Coalition and to the NPS are appreciated. Thanks to Sarah Bransom, Tom Ribe, Mike Warren, Mike Murray, and Don Hellman for sharing items and ideas for this issue. If you see something that might qualify for inclusion in the newsletter, please send it along to BHalainen@gmail.com.

Bill Halainen
Editor

Incidents

Effigy Mounds NM Park Recovering From Severe Storm Impacts

A severe storm that struck the park on Wednesday, July 19th, knocked out power and caused damage to several trails. The park was accordingly closed, but reopened last Friday.

All buildings in the 2,526-acre park escaped damage, but power was disrupted for a day. Crews spent Thursday assessing damage and clearing fallen trees and limbs along the park's hiking trails.

The two most popular hiking trails in the park – the Fire Point Loop and the Yellow River Boardwalk – received a lot of attention from park crews on Thursday. By the end of the day, all of the boardwalk was cleared and open. Most of the Fire Point Loop has reopened as well, although the section between the Little Bear mound and Fire Point will remain closed until a problematic tree hanging over the trail can be addressed by a specialist.

Until further notice, the entire Hanging Rock trail and all trails in the South Unit are closed to public access.

For updates on the status of trails and ranger programming, visit the park's Facebook page or website at www.nps.gov/effigymounds.

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

Olympic NP Woman And Dog Found Alive After Six-Day Search

A woman and her dog who had been stranded in the park for six days were both found alive and well this past Sunday afternoon. They were found in the Lillian River drainage off Obstruction Point Road.

A helicopter crew from Northwest Helicopters found Sajeon E. Geer, 71, and her terrier-Chihuahua dog, Yoda, and within minutes a ground crew made its way to them with food and water.

Geer told the search and rescue team that she had been in the park since the afternoon of July 17th and that she had survived by drinking water she found nearby. Except for minor scratches, she was uninjured.

The search began Saturday after a ranger who was patrolling found Geer's vehicle at the Obstruction Point trailhead. Geer was first reported missing to the Clallam County Sheriff's Office on Wednesday, but hadn't been seen since July 17th.

There were 19 people searching for her Sunday afternoon near the Obstruction Point trailhead, an area about eight miles southeast of the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center that is accessible via a rugged dirt road.

National Park Service employees, Clallam County Search and Rescue, and Kitsap County Search and Rescue helped with the search. A search dog was also on scene Sunday.

Source: [News story](#), *Peninsula Daily News*.

Lake Mead NRA Seven Injured In Two-Vehicle Crash

Seven people were injured in a two-vehicle accident on Lakeshore Road on the afternoon of Saturday, July 22nd.

Two of the injured were transported in critical condition. The other five had nonlife-threatening injuries.

The National Park Service, Boulder City Fire Department, Nevada Highway Patrol, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Mercy Air and Community Ambulance responded.

Source: [News story](#), KSNV Las Vegas.

Glacier NP Visitor Falls To Death Along Going-To-The-Sun Road

On the evening of Saturday, July 22nd, park dispatch received calls from a shuttle bus driver and from a visitor with an inReach device reporting that someone had fallen at Haystack Creek. The creek is approximately five miles west of Logan Pass along the Going-to-the-Sun Road. Park rangers and Two Bear Air Rescue immediately responded.

Rangers found that a man had fallen approximately 100 feet below the road near Haystack Creek. He did not survive the fall.

The victim has been identified as 26-year-old Robert Durbin of Corvallis, Montana. He was traveling to the park on a vacation with family.

Witness reports indicate that Durbin was taking photographs along Haystack Creek on the upper bank of the Going-to-the-Sun Road. At some point, he fell into the creek and was washed through the culvert that goes underneath the road, falling approximately 100 feet below the roadway.

The Going-to-the-Sun Road was closed to traffic in both directions for approximately one hour on Saturday evening while rangers secured the scene of the accident and Two Bear Air Rescue recovered the victim's body from a ledge below the road.

No suspicious circumstances have been noted; the investigation is on-going.

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

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center Forty-Five Large Fires Currently Burning In Ten States

Synopsis

Forty-five large fires are currently active in ten states; so far, they've burned a total of 914,000 acres. The Lodgepole Complex in Montana burned 25,000 acres on Monday alone; evacuations were put into effect for communities in the area.

A MAFFS C-130 air tanker and support personnel from the 152nd Airlift Wing, Nevada Air National Guard, have been deployed to Fresno, California, in support of wildland fire operations.

National Park Service

No large fires are burning in National Park Service areas. Yosemite NP remains fully open despite the proximity of the 79,000-acre Detwiler Fire, now 60% contained. According to a July 21st [news release](#) posted by the park, all hotels, lodges, stores and campgrounds that have opened for the season also remain fully open and operational. All entrances to the park are open; visitors can get to Yosemite Valley via Highway 140 from Mariposa, Highway 41 from Fresno, Highway 120 West from Groveland, and Highway 120 East from Lee Vining and US Route 395.

Active Incident Resource Commitments

Category	July 11th	July 18th	July 25th
Area Command Teams	0	0	0
NIMO Teams	0	0	1
Type 1 Teams	7	5	5
Type 2 Teams	15	11	8
Crews	373	304	293
Engines	1,215	847	953
Helicopters	130	89	101
Total FF/Overhead	16,713	12,030	13,174

Fires/Acreage

Category	2017 Total	2006-2016 Ave	2017 Variance
Year-to-Date Fires	36,182	40,028	- 3,846
Year-to-Date Acres	5,054,494	3,511,202	+ 1,543,292

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.

Department of the Interior Secretary Creates Recreation Advisory Committee

On July 18th, Secretary Zinke announced his intent to create a new advisory committee that will focus on expanding public-private partnerships on America's public lands.

The secretary hosted a roundtable meeting which focused on leveraging public-private partnerships in order to improve visitor experiences on public lands and waters, while also helping to reduce the Department's maintenance backlog. Public-private partnerships are already employed extensively across the National Park Service and other agencies, from managing campgrounds and restaurant management to providing kayak and RV rentals.

"One of my top priorities is to expand recreational access to public lands and waters," he said. "Today I'm excited to announce that, for the first time, the Department of the Interior will host a recreation advisory committee dedicated to looking at public-private partnerships across all public lands."

Along with agency representatives and congressman, attendees included presidents or CEOs from the following recreation groups: American Horse Council, American Recreation Coalition, Archery Trade Association, BoatU.S., Hornblower Cruises, International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association, Motorcycle Industry Council, Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association, Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, American Sportfishing Association, AccessParks, National Marine Manufacturers Association, and the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council.

Source: [News release](#), Department of the Interior.

Capitol Hill Senate – Legislation and Hearings

On July 19th, the Senate Subcommittee on National Parks of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held a hearing on the following bills. Robert Vogel, Acting Deputy Director, National Park Service, was the witness for the Department of the Interior.

- S. 257, to clarify the boundary of Acadia National Park, by requiring future boundary revisions involving lands outside the park be made only by an act of Congress, and to allow the traditional harvesting of clams and worms and other marine organisms, among other provisions;

- S. 312, to redesignate the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site as the Saint-Gaudens National Historical Park;
- S. 355, to amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to provide for a lifetime National Recreational Pass for any veteran with a service-connected disability;
- S. 391, to establish the African Burial Ground International Memorial Museum and Educational Center in New York, New York;
- S. 841, to designate the Veterans Memorial and Museum in Columbus, Ohio, as the National Veterans Memorial and Museum;
- S. 926, to authorize the Global War on Terror Memorial Foundation to establish the National Global War on Terrorism Memorial as a commemorative work in the District of Columbia;
- S. 1073, to authorize Escambia County, Florida, to convey certain property that was formerly part of Santa Rosa Island National Monument and that was conveyed to Escambia County subject to restrictions on use and reconveyance;
- S. 1201, to modify the boundary of the Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site to include seven historic structures across the street from the high school and make them eligible for financial and technical assistance from NPS;
- S. 1403, to amend the Public Lands Corps Act of 1993 to establish the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps to place youth and veterans in national service positions to conserve, restore, and enhance the great outdoors of the United States;
- S. 1438, to redesignate the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in the State of Missouri as the Gateway Arch National Park;
- S. 1459, to establish Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie National Park in the State of South Carolina, which would place Fort Moultrie and the Sullivan's Island Life-Saving Station Historic District, both of which NPS has managed for many years, within the boundary of the park and redesignate the park; and
- S. 1522, to establish an Every Kid Outdoors program.

On July 19th and 20th, the Senate debated the nomination of David Bernhardt of Virginia to be deputy secretary of the interior. Debate will resume on Monday, July 24th, with a final vote expected afterwards.

On July 20th, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on Douglas Domenech of Virginia to be assistant secretary of the interior for insular affairs.

Capitol Hill

House of Representatives – Legislation and Hearings

On July 18th, the House Appropriations Committee approved, by a vote of 30-21, the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, FY 2018. As reported by the committee, the bill includes only minor changes to the bill approved the previous week by the Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations (see the [last issue of this newsletter](#) for particulars on the bill). The changes adopted were as follows:

- Added \$1 million for Historic Preservation Programs, for a total of \$75.4 million, with the additional million designated to increase the Save America's Treasures program to \$5 million.
- Of the \$15 million designated for Centennial Challenge projects and programs, \$2 million was earmarked for the National Park Foundation to leverage additional funds for the NPS in accordance with the National Park Service Centennial Act of 2016.

On July 18th, the House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Natural Resources Committee held a hearing entitled 'Examining Impacts of Federal Natural Resources

Laws Gone Astray, Part II". Testimony was heard from public witnesses only. The hearing focused on the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the National Historic Preservation Act.

On July 19th, the House Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on five bills:

- H.R. 424, to direct the Secretary of the Interior to reissue final rules relating to listing of the gray wolf in the Western Great Lakes and Wyoming under the Endangered Species Act of 1973;
- H.R. 717, to amend the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to require review of the economic cost of adding a species to the list of endangered species or threatened species;
- H.R. 1274, to amend the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to require making available to States affected by determinations that species are endangered species or threatened species all data that is the basis of such determinations;
- H.R. 2603, to amend the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to provide that nonnative species in the United States shall not be treated as endangered species or threatened species; and
- H.R. 3131, to amend the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to conform citizen suits under that act with other existing law.

On July 19th, the House Budget Committee, by a vote of 22-14, approved a concurrent resolution on the Budget for FY 2018.

Park People, Friends and Allies

Washington Office

Gay Vietzke Picked To Head Northeast Region

Gay Vietzke has been selected as the regional director for Northeast Region. She currently serves as the superintendent of National Mall and Memorial Parks in Washington, D.C.

Vietzke served as Northeast Region's deputy regional director from 2011 to 2015, leading the region's park operations, resource stewardship and science, and external affairs and partnerships programs.

Among her many other NPS assignments, she has served as the superintendent of Fort McHenry and Hampton, where she was instrumental in creating a Baltimore-based youth employment program. She managed the design and construction of the eco-friendly Fort McHenry Visitor and Education Center, a \$15 million partnership-funded facility. She also served as superintendent of Sagamore Hill, where she oversaw the park's general management plan, strengthened relationships with partners and opened the newly rehabilitated Old Orchard Museum.

Vietzke holds a bachelor of arts in art history from the University of Connecticut and a master of science in historic preservation from the University of Pennsylvania.

Vietzke will begin her assignment in early September.

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.

- **National Park System** – A paper by member Don Hellman entitled “The National Park Service at 100” has been published by the *Akron Law Review*. The following is excerpted from the abstract on the opening page: “The two primary challenges facing the National Park Service as it moves forward are ensuring sufficient funding for the national park system from Congress and other revenue sources and keeping the national parks relevant to succeeding generations of Americans.” You can also read the full paper by clicking on the “Download” button on the upper right corner of the page. [Full story](#).
- **National Park System** – *Men’s Journal* has posted an article to its website entitled “Why Outsourcing National Park Staff Would Be a Disaster.” The author talks with Phil Francis, CPANP’s vice chair, about the coalition’s opposition to administration proposals to use private contractors to augment/supplant NPS employees. [Full story](#).
- **National Park System** – Coalition member and former superintendent Fred Fagergren has an op-ed piece in the July 22nd edition of the *Salt Lake Tribune* entitled “National Parks Should Be Considered Before Oil And Gas Leasing.” Fred writes about the prospect of BLM issuing oil and gas leases immediately adjacent to national parks: “Going forward, the BLM needs to make certain development is done responsibly and far from our national parks. Approaches exist for striking a balance on public lands that can reduce uncertainty for industry while preserving the wonders of our national parks.” [Full story](#).
- **Glacier NP** – In case you missed any of the myriad stories about DOI blocking Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg from meeting with the park’s superintendent and a park climate scientist, there’s a good piece in the July 20th *Flathead Beacon*. It includes this interesting quote from the DOI spokesperson about why the action was taken: “Allocating extensive government resources at the taxpayer expense to a celebrity would have been a waste of taxpayer money and a disservice to average park-goers.” [Full story](#).
- **Appalachian NST/Blue Ridge Parkway** – The July 14th edition of the *Los Angeles Times* had a story about the intense controversy over a proposed natural gas pipeline that would have a big impact on the Appalachian Trail: “A natural gas developer with some powerful political allies is nearing final approval to plow a pipeline corridor as wide as 150 feet, tracking the trail for dozens of miles and burrowing through it at one point.” The pipeline would also impact Blue Ridge Parkway. [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

"An urgent need of the Park Service [in its early years] was to develop a capable and professional ranger force. At his first national parks conference, Mather had been disappointed with the caliber of the superintendents, many of whom were politically appointed lightweights, unmoved by his idealism. Rangers and superintendents were not under civil service, and predictably the parks were crippled by vigorous application of the spoils system. When a new administration took office in Washington, the faces of new superintendents appeared in the parks, for appointments to many jobs were prerogatives of local congressmen. A story is told, which has the ring of truth, that one such ranger appointee in Glacier National Park had to be assigned patrol duty along the railroad tracks so that he wouldn't get lost in the woods. Postponing entry into civil service, the Park Service thoroughly cleaned house. It unloaded misfits and shifted jobs around and was highly successful in finding good men, many of whom were attracted from other agencies. Fortunately, from its beginnings, the Park Service has been able to attract a different type of individual. A group of men [and women] from unlikely backgrounds have somehow been assembled who combine a cultivated disregard for standard operating procedures with an unorthodox ability to get the job done. For the special flavor that such men [and women] have imparted to the agency, the Park Service has been grateful – generally."

[William C. Everhart](#), *The National Park Service*, 1972

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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.

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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