



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

**Wednesday, August 30, 2017**

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### **Incidents**

#### **John Day Fossil Beds National Monument IMT, SETT Assist Park With Management Of Solar Eclipse Crowds**

On the morning of August 21st, thousands of visitors gathered in the Oregon park to witness the total eclipse of the sun.

Visitation drastically increased daily as the eclipse approached. Each of the park's three units saw a significant increase in traffic in the days leading up to the eclipse. Parking lots quickly filled on the day of the eclipse, with parking overflowing onto road shoulders. Additional day parking areas created in designated fields absorbed overflow parking in the Sheep Rock and Painted Hills units.

The Thomas Condon Paleontology Center had record visitation and sales for several days around the event, including Sunday visitation at 765% of the previous highest single day. For the week of August 15th, total visitation to the Paleontology Center was 22% of the total visitation for all of 2016.

Pacific West Region's IMT worked with park staff and an NPS special events tactical team to prepare for and manage the predicted high visitation, including management of volunteer interpretive rangers, public access, road closures, emergency response, and traffic and parking congestion. Social media leading up to and during the week provided planning and safety messages as well as updates the day of the eclipse as parking lots filled.

A wildland fire contingency plan was developed due to extreme fire danger, but fortunately was not implemented. There were no incidents or injuries during the days leading up to or during the eclipse.

Source: [News release](#), John Day Fossil Beds NM.

#### **Grand Teton National Park Body Of Fallen Climber Recovered**

Rangers recovered the body of climber Alexander Kenan, 24, on Friday, August 25th.

A commercial mountain guide and his client discovered Kenan's body as they were rappelling down from Peak 11,840, a notable obstacle along the traverse between Teewinot Mountain and Mount Owen. The guide notified Jenny Lake Rangers of the discovery at 10:15 a.m.

Two rangers were flown by helicopter to a backcountry landing zone near the summit of Peak 11,840. The rangers made three rappels down to the scene, conducted a preliminary investigation, and prepared Kenan's body for extraction by helicopter long line.

Kenan's body was flown to Lupine Meadows at 3:30 p.m. Shortly thereafter, a Teton County deputy coroner and investigating rangers were able to identify the body as that of Kenan's.

Kenan's body was found among rocks approximately 400 feet below Peak 11,840 on its southwest side. He was found with a climbing rope, helmet, and climbing gear appropriate for the terrain. Due to the location and condition of the body, rangers believe Kenan died from a fall within the past week.

There are no known witnesses to the incident which led to Kenan's death. The incident is under investigation by the Jenny Lake rangers. They ask anyone who was climbing in the Teewinot Mountain or Mount Owen area on or after Monday, August 21st, to call Teton Interagency Dispatch Center at 307-739-3301 whether or not they saw Kenan.

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

### **Joshua Tree National Park Families Seek Assistance In Finding Missing Hikers**

Over four weeks have passed since searchers began looking for Rachel Nguyen and Joseph Orbeso, a couple who have not been seen since they headed out on a hike on July 27th.

With thousands of hours of search time by hundreds of searchers resulting in few leads, the National Park Service and the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department have entered into what is known as a limited continuous search mode.

During this phase of the search, agencies will continue to methodically search areas of high probability within the park whenever sufficient resources are available. They lack the staff and resources to carry on the search with the same intensity as during the initial phase.

The families of the missing pair have asked the public for help in finding them. They are offering a reward of \$10,000 for any information that leads to the successful and safe return of Nguyen and Orbeso. It is their hope that the missing party may have left on their own accord and are alive somewhere outside the park. The couple's vehicle was found at the trailhead of a popular hiking trail known as the Maze Loop.

Those who might have been hiking or stopping in the area and recall seeing a couple in their early twenties or having other pertinent information about the two are asked to contact San Bernardino Dispatch at 909- 383-5652 and request the detective division.

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

### **New River Gorge National River Search Crews Find Body Of Missing Swimmer**

Search and rescue personnel located the body of 28-year-old Abdulrahman Binomran around 6 pm last Friday night.

National Park Service rangers, personnel from West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, and trained volunteer search and rescue divers from the Beaver Volunteer Fire Department's dive team had been searching for Binomran since Thursday afternoon, when he disappeared while swimming in the river.

Binomran had been swimming with three friends in the pools above Fayette Station rapids on August 24th when they decided to swim through the rapids and gather on the other side. Although Binomran's companions made it to shore, he was seen struggling and then disappeared under the water at approximately 4:45 pm. None of the swimmers were wearing life jackets.

Search crews responded immediately. After nothing was turned up on Thursday evening, search operations resumed Friday morning. Strong undercurrents, deep eddys, murky water, and a very rocky, boulder-strewn river bottom made for difficult search conditions. After a long day of searching, a volunteer diver found Binomran's body securely lodged under a large boulder about 18 feet below the river's surface and very close to the point where he was last seen by witnesses.

This was the second drowning in the park in two weeks; neither victim was wearing a life jacket.

Source: [News release](#), New River Gorge NR.

### **Buffalo National River Rangers Involved In Fatal Shooting**

An encounter between two park rangers and camper John Bolger at the Spring Creek Campground on the night of August 20th ended in Bolger's death. Since the park has not posted a news release and since the investigation is still underway, only newspaper accounts, some conjectural, are currently available. Several appear below for your perusal:

[Springfield News-Leader, August 22nd](#)

[Springfield News-Leader, August 25th](#)

[Springfield News-Leader, August 28th](#)

More information will be provided when and if it becomes available.

### **National Fire Situation**

#### **National Interagency Fire Center National Preparedness At Highest Level**

##### **Synopsis**

The national preparedness level has been at PL5 – its highest level – since the last edition of this newsletter appeared on August 9th. Large fire activity continues throughout the West, where 52 large fires have burned more than 654,000 acres. Firefighters are making progress toward containment goals despite hot and dry conditions. More than 19,000 firefighters and overhead personnel and 32 teams are currently committed.

#### **Glacier National Park**

The lightning-caused Sprague Fire was reported the evening of August 10th and is burning above Crystal Ford on the Gunsight Pass Trail. A Northern Rockies Type II IMT (Hutton) is now

managing the fire. It had burned 1,575 acres as of yesterday. A total of 135 firefighters and overhead personnel were committed.

Less than 1% of the park is affected by the fire; most areas of the park are open and operating as usual, including the Going-to-the-Sun Road. Closures remain in place for the Gunsight Pass Trail from Lake McDonald to Gunsight Pass, including all secondary trails. The Lincoln Lake Trail is also closed. Some backcountry campgrounds are closed due to fire activity. All front country campgrounds remain open.

The following websites are available for more information:

- [Sprague Fire incident information](#)
- [Current conditions, including rail and road information](#)
- [Park webcams](#)

### **Crater Lake National Park**

The previously reported Spruce Lake Fire and Blanket Creek Fire are now part of the High Cascades Complex, which consists of 20 fires located within the park, the Rogue River/Siskiyou National Forest, the Umpqua National Forest, and the Fremont/Winema National Forest. Thirteen of these fires have been contained and are in patrol status. The remainder are being managed with a full suppression strategy.

Fires in the complex have burned 21,432 acres to date. They are being managed by a Type 1 IMT (Pechota); 610 firefighters and overhead are committed.

The park has issued a Level 1 Evacuation Notification for Mazama Village. The notification advises residents and visitors to “be ready” for a potential evacuation of Mazama Village, including employee dormitories and trailer sites, in the event that the Blanket Creek Fire approaches these areas. Current or projected threats from the approaching fire indicate that there may be a need to evacuate in the future, but there are no mandatory evacuations at this time. Rim Village, park headquarters and other areas in the park are not affected by this notification.

The following websites are available for more information:

- [High Cascades Complex incident information](#)
- [Mazama Village Level 1 evacuation notification](#)
- [Park webcams](#)

### **Active Incident Resource Commitments**

<b>Category</b>	<b>August 1st</b>	<b>August 8th</b>	<b>August 29th</b>
Area Command Teams	0	1	1
NIMO Teams	2	2	2
Type 1 Teams	6	6	11
Type 2 Teams	10	16	18
Crews	284	377	419
Engines	678	849	1,027
Helicopters	92	119	157
Total FF/Overhead	11,502	16,004	19,127

## **Fires/Acreage**

<b>Category</b>	<b>2017 Total</b>	<b>2006-2016 Ave</b>	<b>2017 Variance</b>
Year-to-Date Fires	45,828	48,817	- 2,989
Year-to-Date Acres	6,805,947	5,207,225	+ 1,598,722

Sources: [National Interagency Fire Center](#), [InciWeb](#).

## **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 Sends Monument Report To White House**

On Thursday, August 24th, Secretary Zinke sent a draft report to the president which included his findings and recommendations on national monuments that were under review as a result of the president's April 26th executive order.

The extensive 120-day review included more than 60 meetings with hundreds of advocates and opponents of monument designations, tours of monuments conducted over air, foot, car, and horseback (including a virtual tour of a marine monument), and a thorough review of more than 2.4 million public comments submitted to the Department on regulations.gov. Additionally, countless more meetings and conversations between senior Interior officials and local, state, Tribal, and non-government stakeholders including multiple Tribal listening sessions.

"No president should use the authority under the Antiquities Act to restrict public access, prevent hunting and fishing, burden private land, or eliminate traditional land uses, unless such action is needed to protect the object," said Secretary Zinke. "The recommendations I sent to the president on national monuments will maintain federal ownership of all federal land and protect the land under federal environmental regulations, and also provide a much needed change for the local communities who border and rely on these lands for hunting and fishing, economic development, traditional uses, and recreation."

The following six national monuments were announced to have been removed from review prior to the August 24th deadline:

- Craters of the Moon
- Hanford Reach
- Upper Missouri River Breaks
- Grand Canyon-Parashant
- Canyons of the Ancients
- Sand to Snow

A summary of Zinke's report can be read [at this site](#).

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

## **Park People, Friends and Allies**

### **National Park Service**

#### **Passing Of Coalition Member Bill Briggie**

William J. (Bill) Briggie passed away on August 13th in Vancouver, Washington.

Bill began his National Park Service career working seasonally at Sequoia and Kings Canyon in 1947. His final assignment was at Mount Rainier National Park, where he retired as superintendent in 1999.

In his over 50-year career, Bill's assignments were many and varied. He held supervisory park ranger positions at Theodore Roosevelt, Yellowstone and Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks. In 1961 he became a recreation planner in Southeast Regional Office, then transferred to Washington, DC, to work with the new Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.

Bill became a protégé of Director George Hartzog and served as his special assistant. In 1965 he returned to the field as assistant superintendent at Lake Mead. Throughout his career he was superintendent of four parks: Glen Canyon, Lake Mead, Glacier and Mount Rainier (twice).

In 1976, Director Everhardt recruited him to be deputy director of the NPS. Bill also served for many years as the deputy regional director and acting regional director in Seattle.

In addition to his regular work assignments, Bill was tapped to head several important efforts. He served as director of the national parks centennial, marking the 100th anniversary of the founding of Yellowstone. In 1991 Bill was the steering committee chair for the Vail Symposium, which commemorated the National Park Service's 75th anniversary.

He also undertook several overseas assignments, participating on teams that evaluated parks in Ethiopia, Venezuela, Bulgaria and Romania.

Bill Briggie was the recipient of numerous awards throughout his career. He won the 1993 Cornelius Amory Pugsley National Medal in recognition of his contributions to the preservation and protection of America's natural and historic resources. Bill also received the Department of Interior's Meritorious Service Award (1973) and its Distinguished Service Award (1987).

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Bill's daughter: Kristan B. Sias, 3910 NE 29th Ave., Portland, OR 97212, or [Kristan.sias@gmail.com](mailto:Kristan.sias@gmail.com).

Donations in Bill's memory may be made to the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks. He was a longstanding member of this organization: <http://protectnps.org/donate/>.

### **Department of the Interior**

#### **Death Of Secretary Cecil Andrus**

Cecil Andrus, 85, former Secretary of the Interior and the longest-serving governor of Idaho, died on August 24th, the day before his birthday. The following is excerpted from a tribute to him written by Rocky Barker and posted in the August 25th *Idaho Statesman*; the full article can be read at the link below.

Andrus went from logging to the governor's mansion in 1970 before Jimmy Carter made him Idaho's first presidential cabinet member, recruiting him as Interior secretary. He held that position from 1977 to 1981, then returned to Idaho and won back the governor's desk in 1986,

championing increased support for education. He served four total terms as governor, the only Idahoan to do so.

Andrus' greatest national legacy is the 1980 Alaska Lands Act, which protected more than 100 million acres as national parks, wildlife refuges and wilderness. The wilderness and national park legislation had been on environmentalists' agenda since the 1960s, after the passage of the Wilderness Act. Several attempts were made to push it through, but each was stopped by the powerful Alaska congressional delegation, especially Republican Sen. Ted Stevens.

The deadlock was broken with a classic Andrus power play. In 1978, Andrus convinced Carter to use the Antiquities Act to set 56 million acres of Alaska land aside as national monuments, preventing future development with the stroke of a pen. By doing so, they put the ball in the court of Alaska Republican Rep. Don Young and wilderness opponents, who would need a bill to override Carter and Andrus.

"It was clear to anybody that if it didn't pass before 1980, Reagan would come in and you wouldn't ever set aside nearly as much wilderness and park lands," Gaylord Nelson, then a U.S. senator from Wisconsin, said in a 1995 interview. The two were hung in effigy around the state.

Andrus worked closely with Rep. Mo Udall, D-Ariz., to finally pass a bill protecting 104.3 million acres, including 12 new parks, 56 million acres of wilderness, 25 wild and scenic rivers, and 11 new national wildlife refuges.

"You'll never adopt anything like that again," Nelson said.

Andrus also shepherded through a landmark mining reclamation law, a progressive oil leasing program, and programs to protect wetlands, wildlife and fish. In Idaho, he withdrew lands along the Snake River for what is now the Morley Nelson Birds of Prey National Conservation Area. Bills to protect the Gospel Hump and Frank Church-River of No Return wilderness areas were passed with Andrus' support and active lobbying.

A private funeral will be held today; a public memorial service is set for 2 p.m. tomorrow in the Jordan Ballroom of the Boise State University Student Union.

Andrus' family asks that donations in his memory go to the Andrus Center for Public Policy at Boise State — specifically an endowed chair, the Cecil D. Andrus Center Chair for Environment and Public Lands. Donations can be made at this link, or mail checks to Boise State University Foundation, Cecil D. Andrus Chair (SE009), 1173 W. University Drive, Boise, ID 83725.

Source: Idaho Statesman. [Full story](#).

## **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** – News 13 WLOS, a station in western North Carolina, has posted an article entitled "Interior Secretary Zinke Outlines Future Of National Park Service." It was based on an interview with Zinke while visiting Great Smoky Mountains NP for the Service's annual anniversary event. [Full story](#).



- **National Park System** – The August 21st edition of the *Washington Post* has an article on the huge rush to buy the America the Beautiful pass before its price jumped by 700% (the deadline for purchasing the cheaper passes was this past Sunday). Quote: “Across the country, park personnel are working hard to keep up with demand. The National Park Service says that it has received more than 250,000 requests for passes this year. That’s more than seven times its previous record of 33,000 requests.” [Full story](#).
- **National Park System** – As you’ve no doubt seen due to the wide media coverage, the NPS is discontinuing its policy encouraging parks to eliminate the sale of disposable plastic water bottles. The following link contains the article that appeared in *U.S. News and World Report*. [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.
- **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**

In the closing page of his memoir, former Secretary of the Interior and Idaho governor Cecil Andrus quotes the poet Robert Frost: "We should not have to care so much, you and I." Andrus then added his own perspective:

"But we do care and we should. We care about the future ... I remain hopeful that I will be able to pass on to my grandchildren all the pleasures of life in an unspoiled West. Perhaps hope should be replaced by a stronger word. It is a matter of obligation."

[Secretary of the Interior Cecil Andrus](#)

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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.”

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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