



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

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Incidents

North Carolina Areas

Outer Banks Parks Close As Hurricane Maria Approaches

The National Weather Service is predicting that the North Carolina coast will experience significant impacts from Hurricane Maria for the next few days – heavy rain, flooding and overwash, high waves, rip currents, and high winds. Mandatory non-resident evacuation orders have been issued for Ocracoke and Hatteras Islands by [Hyde](#) and [Dare](#) Counties.

Outer Banks Group – All three parks in the group – Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Wright Brothers National Memorial and Fort Raleigh National Historic Site – have been closed. Visitor services and facilities have been closed at Cape Hatteras NS. ORV beach access ramps have been closed and cabled and beaches are open only for walking.

Cape Lookout National Seashore – Due to storm conditions, which are expected to last through the week, the park has issued a mandatory evacuation order. Cabins in the park were closed on Tuesday. Reservations at Great Island and Long Point Cabin Camps have also been canceled until further notice.

Sources: [Cape Hatteras](#), [Wright Brothers](#), [Fort Raleigh](#) and [Cape Lookout](#).

Southeast Region

Hurricane Irma Recovery Operations Continue

The Service's Eastern Incident Management Team continues to prioritize support for employee emergency needs, especially for staff in the six national parks in the Caribbean. Support staff have responded to the parks in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico to help establish communications and provide critical supplies. An IMT will likely be dispatched to the Caribbean later this week, when travel conditions improve.

The 110-foot *MV Fort Jefferson*, normally used to transport staff and supplies to Dry Tortugas National Park, has been loaded with over 24 tons of supplies and equipment for national parks in the Caribbean. The vessel departed on Monday for the 78-hour trip from Key West to the Caribbean parks.

The IMT currently has 392 laborers, saw team members, arborists, heavy equipment operators and other employees on the ground in South Florida, along the Atlantic coast and in the Caribbean, clearing debris and working to safely reopen parks damaged by Hurricane Irma. The team is beginning its third week of operations and is composed of NPS employees from 111 national parks in 38 states.

Caribbean National Parks

All six national parks in the Caribbean remain closed. Damage assessments and recovery efforts will resume when employee accountability and emergency needs have been addressed and completed.

South Florida National Parks

Big Cypress National Preserve – The park remains closed to visitors; access is limited to land owners only. The boil water notice has been lifted, and electrical power has been temporarily restored to park headquarters. Park facilities have sustained extensive roof damage that became more evident as heavy rains moved into the area over the last several days. The paved section of the Loop Road (approximately six miles) is clear, but the unpaved portion of the road remains closed due to clearing operations.

Biscayne National Park – Boca Chita Key is now open, but all other facilities remain closed, including the Dante Fascell Visitor Center, Elliott Key, and Adams Key. Park waters are open for navigation, although boaters are advised to use extreme caution. A saw crew is removing damaged trees and clearing debris on Elliott and Adams Keys. Repairs are in progress at University Dock and Convoy Point. A crane is removing a displaced section of dock along with boardwalk pieces.

Dry Tortugas National Park – The park has reopened for recreation and camping in all areas except the following, which have been temporarily closed: Small sections of the moat wall walk around Fort Jefferson on Garden Key; the area immediately around a wrecked sailboat on the northeast shore of Bush Key; the dock at Loggerhead Key due to missing deck boards; the area immediately around the previously collapsed boathouse; and the park gift shop. A notice to mariners is in effect for the navigation channels within the park due to missing or damaged aids to navigation. Ferry operations from Key West will resume on September 28th.

Everglades National Park – Terrestrial areas of the park remain closed, but park waters are open, including for use by commercial permit holders. Boaters are advised that the Flamingo Marina is closed and no services are available. Internet and cell services have been restored. Areas east of the L-67 Canal and south to Buzzards Roost/Grossman's Ridge (commonly known as East Everglades) have opened for private airboating. Multiple hazards exist throughout park waters. Twenty-six housing units in the Flamingo Bay Area were mucked out on Sunday. Power washing operations are now underway in the Flamingo Bay Visitor Center. Dump trucks are working in the Flamingo Bay area to remove mud, salt, and debris. Sawyer crews and an Arborist Incident Response (AIR) team are working on damaged and downed trees near the Flamingo Bay Visitor Center. Sawyer crews are clearing roads in the Long Pine Key area and continuing to clear the main park road south to Flamingo Bay. A plan is being developed to address derelict vessels.

Atlantic Coast Parks

Cumberland Island National Seashore – The park remains closed. Camping reservations have been cancelled through October 11th. A hunt on the island scheduled for three days in October has been cancelled. Saw crews and an AIR team continue to work along the main road for the

entire the length of island. Crews continue to clean the visitor center, museum, and warehouse on the mainland.

Fort Matanzas National Monument – The visitor center area of the park remains closed pending removal of hazard limbs and trees, but the beach and island areas are open to the public. The fort will remain inaccessible to the public until repairs to ferry boats can be completed.

Fort Pulaski National Monument – Staff continue to clean the fort and visitor center area. Crews are documenting damaged trees along trails that will require additional assistance to be removed. Plans are being developed for repairs to the damaged roof and the pump house water tank.

Additional updates on the status of these parks can be found at [this link](#). Numerous photos of hurricane damage and incident response can be found at [this Flickr link](#).

Source: [Incident Management Team Hurricane Irma Update, Monday, September 25th](#)

Sequoia National Park Family Of Three Seriously Injured By Lightning Strike

A father and his two children are recovering after being struck by lightning on a Labor Day backpacking trip to Sequoia National Park.

Chris Lovera and his two children, Aidan, 12, and Nadia, 9, were caught in a storm at Jennie Lake during their first family backpacking trip. They'd just hiked six miles on a trail when it began to pour, and Lovera stopped to take a short video of the experience and post it to Facebook.

Moments later, a lightning bolt struck the tree they sat under and hit all of them. Witnesses later told them that it looked like the electricity blew them up and that their bodies were "flying," Lovera said in a Facebook post.

The father suffered first- and second-degree burns on his back, arm pit and down his arm; his skin was black and the clothes burned off his body. Lovera was also paralyzed for a few hours. Nadia suffered burns to her arm and thighs and also suffered partial paralysis. Aidan's injuries were the worst, Lovera said. His eardrum was blown out, he was wounded from the top of his skull to his jawline, and his legs were burned.

Campers at Jennie Lake rushed to the family's aid and called for emergency services. Soon, the three were riding in a California Highway Patrol helicopter and on their way to Community Regional Medical Center in Fresno, where they are recovering.

Source: [Fresno Bee](#), submitted by member Dennis Burnett.

Grand Canyon National Park Man Sentenced To Jail Term Following DUI, Assault Incidents

Nathan Goodman, 36, recently pleaded guilty to DUI and driving without a license in the park and has been sentenced to six months' imprisonment and four years of supervised probation.

When Goodman was contacted by rangers on the night of August 16th, he showed several signs of impaired driving, including weaving, driving at erratic speeds, nearly striking a stationary object, and failing to yield to an emergency vehicle. They also found a significant amount of blood on Goodman's clothing and detected a strong odor of alcohol about him. When tested, his blood-alcohol content was 0.215, well above the legal limit.

Though Goodman, a convicted felon, is prohibited from possessing weapons, he had several on his person at the time of the incident. His license was found to be invalid and the car's registration was also determined to be invalid.

The next morning, park EMS personnel were called out by the victim of an assault. Rangers were able to identify Goodman as the assailant; he'd inflicted blunt-force trauma on the victim and destroyed property in the victim's home. ISB special agents were asked to take the lead on the assault investigation.

Along with the sentence noted above, Goodman may not contact the victim, enter Grand Canyon National Park, or possess weapons. He must also pay restitution and seek mental health counseling.

Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#).

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center National Preparedness Level Drops From PL 5 To PL 3

Synopsis

NIFC has downgraded the national preparedness level to PL 3, as wildland fire activity has drastically slowed down due to improving weather conditions. No new large fires were reported on Monday.

National Park Service Fires

Yosemite National Park – The Empire Fire, located a mile east of the Badger Pass ski area, has burned 6,340 acres and remains 55% contained. No new updates. [Empire Fire incident information](#)

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. It has burned 16,790 acres and is 75% contained. The Going-to-the-Sun Road is closed from Apgar to Logan Pass, but Logan Pass is still accessible from Saint Mary. The Adair Peak Fire was reported the evening of August 12th and is located south of Logging Lake. It has burned 4,034 acres and is 75% contained. [Sprague Fire incident information](#), [Adair Peak Fire incident information](#)

Active Incident Resource Commitments

Category	September 12th	September 19th	September 26th
Area Command Teams	4	1	0
NIMO Teams	4	3	2
Type 1 Teams	13	7	2
Type 2 Teams	20	26	12
Crews	474	346	222
Engines	1,271	733	374
Helicopters	187	147	51
Total FF/Overhead	22,974	16,007	9,414

Fires/Acreage

Category	2017 Total	2006-2016 Ave	2017 Variance
Year-to-Date Fires	48,850	53,691	- 4,841
Year-to-Date Acres	8,508,143	5,843,071	+ 2,665,072

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.

The Senate

On September 18th, the Senate passed, by a vote of 89 to 8, H.R. 2810, the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2018. Among other provisions, an amendment was adopted to authorize the secretary of the interior to establish restroom facilities in the vicinity of the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial within George Washington Memorial Parkway, VA. The bill now goes to a conference with the House to resolve the differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill.

On September 18th, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources approved the nomination of Ryan Douglas Nelson, of Idaho, to be Solicitor, Department of the Interior.

The House

Nothing this week.

Department of the Interior Secretary Installs New Hunting Arcade Game In DOI

The following is excerpted from a recent press release issued by DOI:

“Today, on the heels of a groundbreaking directive to expand hunting access on public lands, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke announced his latest initiative to reemphasize hunting and fishing at the Department with a new temporary addition to the employee cafeteria: the arcade game ‘Big Buck Hunter Pro.’

“The Secretary also announced the ‘Secretary's Shotgun Showdown,’ a fun employee competition on the game, with the winner earning bragging rights and a personal visit with the Secretary. The contest runs from today, September 19th until Wednesday, October 11th.

“Completing the Department's goals and objectives hinges on employee awareness and involvement. Having the ‘Big Buck Hunter Pro’ arcade game will get many employees involved in sportmen's season, in turn furthering the Department's mission of wildlife and habitat conservation.”

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

Park People, Friends and Allies

Redwood National and State Parks New Superintendent Selected

Steven Mietz has been named the new superintendent of Redwood National and State Parks. He will be transferring from Great Basin NP and replaces Steven Prokop, who retired earlier in the year.

Under Mietz's tenure, Great Basin National Park was designated an International Dark Sky Park. The park and its nonprofit partners raised \$800,000 to construct the Great Basin Observatory. It will take advantage of what is considered some of the best night sky viewing in the nation, according to the release. He also oversaw the completion of several large-scale campsite rehabilitations and ecological restoration projects.

Mietz has worked for the federal government for more than 18 year, including stints with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Geological Survey. He joined the National Park Service in 2003.

Over the course of his career, Mietz has served in a variety positions, including as Midwest Region's acting associate regional director for natural resources, superintendent of Missouri National Recreational River, and deputy chief of science and resource management at Grand Canyon National Park.

Prior to working at Grand Canyon, he worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Grizzly Bear Recovery Program, the University of Montana's Flathead Lake Biological Station, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation.

Mietz is currently on temporary assignment as the superintendent of Point Reyes National Seashore in the San Francisco Bay Area. He will return to Great Basin National Park before taking the reins at Redwood, which is expected to be sometime in late fall.

Mietz earned his bachelor of science degree from Cornell University and his masters from the University of Montana. His personal interests include hiking, camping and cross-country skiing, according to the release.

Source: [Eureka Times-Standard](#), courtesy of member Dennis Burnett.

Grand Canyon National Park Lisa Carrico Selected As Deputy Superintendent

Lisa Carrico, a 33-year veteran of the NPS, has been selected as the park's new deputy superintendent for operations and science. She is currently the superintendent at Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve.

She began her NPS career as a volunteer at New River Gorge National River after returning from a two-year Peace Corps assignment in Ghana. Her first permanent position was at Mesa Verde National Park. Over her 33-year career, Carrico has worked at Scotts Bluff National Monument, Colorado National Monument, Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, Big Bend National Park, and Tumacacori National Historical Park.

A graduate of the College of William and Mary, Carrico was born and raised in national parks across the country. She moves to Grand Canyon with her dog and cat in mid-November.

Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#).

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.

- **Department of the Interior** – According to an Associated Press article, Secretary Zinke told an oil industry group that “nearly one-third of employees at his department are not loyal to him and President Donald Trump, adding that he is working to change the department’s regulatory culture to be more business friendly.” [Full story](#). Sent along by member Joan Anzelmo. See the closing quote for Sen. Cantwell’s response.
- **National Monuments** – The *National Review*, a semi-monthly conservative editorial magazine focusing on news and commentary pieces on political, social, and cultural affairs, posted an article on September 25th entitled “Trump Wants to Free Up Federal Lands, His Interior Secretary Fails Him.” The first few lines provide an idea as to the tenor of the article: “The president should ignore Ryan Zinke’s recommendations and revoke illegally designated or expanded national monuments... Instead of doing as asked, Secretary Zinke recommended decreasing the size of only four of the most blatantly illegal national monuments while leaving the boundaries of all the others standing with molycoddle language, which will soon get stricken by environmentalists.” [Full story](#).
- **Mesa Verde National Park** – The fall edition of *National Parks*, the magazine of the National Parks Conservation Association, has an article on the impacts of climate change on the park’s cliff dwellings. Quote: “The same erosion that carved the sweeping alcoves in these sandstone cliffs will eventually lead to their demise, but staff believe that climate change may be hastening the disintegration. In particular, they blame freeze-thaw cycles, in which water seeps deep into the stone, then freezes and expands, wedging the rock apart.” [Full story](#).
- **Hawaii Volcanoes National Park** – When Dave Parker, 77, entered Hawaii Volcanoes National Park last Tuesday night, he accomplished his lifelong dream of visiting all of the system’s 59 national parks – a project that’s been underway since he was 14 years old, when his parents took him to his first parks, Yellowstone and Grand Teton. [Full story](#).

Systemwide

Notes On Park Operations and Maintenance

Short reports regarding the National Park System’s 400 plus parks and its central, regional and training offices:

- **Channel Islands National Park** – Santa Barbara Island has reopened to the public. Landings at the island have been restricted to the rocky ledge adjacent to the dock. The dock remains closed and is not expected to be repaired in the near future due to the severe nature of damage that occurred with successive storms the past two winters. The island trail system has been stabilized following severe damage from storms this past winter. [More information](#).

- **Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Historical Park** – A GMP for the Moccasin Bend National Archeological District was approved on September 14th. The park will now begin implementing the plan, which includes establishment of a visitor center on Hamm Road, as well as archeological site protection, guided interpretation, and improved access to the Brown’s Ferry site to better interpret the American Indian history of Moccasin Bend. [More information](#).

**Systemwide
Upcoming Events**

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

- **September 27** – The Senate Subcommittee on National Parks will hold an oversight hearing entitled “Encouraging the Next Generation to Visit National Parks.” It will be held in Room 366 of the Dirksen Building at 2 p.m. [More information](#).
- **September 27** – The House Committee on Natural Resources’ Subcommittee on Oversight and investigations will hold a hearing at 3 p.m. in 1334 Longworth on “Exploring Solutions to Reduce Risks of Catastrophic Wildfire and Improve Resiliency of National Forests.” Testifying will be panelists from the [Geos Institute](#), Ravalli County (Montana), [American Forest Resource Council](#), and the [Intertribal Timber Council](#). [More information](#).
- **September 30** – National Public Lands Day. The event, sponsored by Toyota Motor North America, is the nation's largest, single-day volunteer effort for public lands. [More information, including registration of events](#).
- **October 18-22** – Ranger Rendezvous 40, Association of National Park Rangers, YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park, Colorado. [More information](#).

A Closing Observation

This week’s observation is in response to Secretary Zinke’s comments about disloyalty among DOI employees (see “NPS News” above):

“The public servants at the Department of the Interior deserve respect from the man charged with leading them—not cheap shots in the press. Secretary’s Zinke’s comments yesterday betray a fundamental misunderstanding of the role of federal civil service. They are non-political employees charged with implementing and enforcing laws passed by Congress and have incredible domain expertise in their areas of responsibility. Replacing them with purely political people will not protect our public lands or protect taxpayers from special interest sweetheart deals.”

[Senator Maria Cantwell \(D-WA\)](#)

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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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