



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

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Volume 1

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### **Incidents**

#### **Southeast Region Hurricane Recovery Operations Continue**

In addition to the primary objectives of caring for park employees and providing emergency stabilization of park sites, the National Park Service IMT has also deployed a team of resource specialists to assess natural and cultural resource damage. Specialists are surveying resources in park museums, unique natural habitats (including coral reefs), and archaeological sites on park lands and underwater.

Resource teams have been assessing damages to cultural resources ranging from shipwrecks and cannons to archives and historic maps. Divers have been assessing resources along reefs and shipwrecks at Dry Tortugas National Park and Biscayne National Park, which can be especially vulnerable to damage caused by sand and debris movement. Natural resource specialists have also been studying potential impacts on threatened and endangered species, including the Florida panther.

More than 244 NPS employees from 90 national parks and offices across 36 states continue to support seven parks in South Florida and the Atlantic Coast to help them ready for reopening. Parks plan to open more areas throughout the week as stabilization work continues.

The following update was prepared on Monday:

*Big Cypress National Preserve* – The preserve remains closed to all visitor use; access is limited to land owners only. The unpaved portion of the Loop Road remains closed due to downed trees. Clearing operations were temporarily suspended due to the presence of poisonwood. Equipment has been ordered to help accomplish safe debris removal in this area.

*Biscayne National Park* – The park is partially open. Employees returned to work on Monday in preparation for reopening this week.

*Everglades National Park* – The park is partially open. The Homestead visitor entrance is currently open to Paurotis Pond. Several trails, including the Gumbo Limbo Trail, and Pa-hay-okee Overlook remain closed. Clearing operations continue along the main road toward Flamingo in addition to operations in the Flamingo, Shark Valley, and Gulf Coast areas. The

park will close at night for safety and security purposes. Restrooms and water options are limited throughout the park. Park boat operators continue marking underwater debris. Shark Valley, the Gulf Coast Visitor Center, and the Flamingo area remain closed. Rising flood waters in the Shark Valley area are threatening administrative buildings and housing.

*Cumberland Island National Seashore* – The Cumberland Island Mainland Museum is open. Due to the continued closure of the park, though, camping reservations are being cancelled through October 18th. 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 beach and island areas of the park 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* – The park is closed, but all employees are back at work in preparation for reopening later this week. Water tank replacement and electrical work is planned for this afternoon and Tuesday. An Arborist Incident Team has begun removing damaged limbs and trees.

Additional parks are closed along the Atlantic coast, but are handling closures with park staff. [Click on this link](#) for updates on the status of all parks. [Click on this link](#) to see a Flickr gallery of hurricane damage and recovery operation photos.

Source: [IMT Update, October 2, 2017](#).

### **Yosemite National Park El Capitan Rockfalls Kill One, Injures Another**

On the afternoon of September 28th, a series of seven rockfalls occurred over a four-hour time span from the southeast face of El Capitan.

A preliminary estimate for the cumulative volume of all seven rockfalls is about 16,000 cubic feet (450 cubic meters), or about 1,300 tons. The irregular "sheet" of rock that fell is estimated to be 130 feet tall, 65 feet wide, and 3 to 10 feet thick. The source point is about 650 feet above the base of El Capitan, or about 1,800 feet above the floor of Yosemite Valley, which is at 4,000 feet in elevation.

After the first rockfall, rangers and SAR team members entered the area looking for people at the base of the rockfall. Two people were found, one of whom had been killed and the other injured. The victims, a couple visiting the park from Great Britain, were in the park to rock climb, but were not climbing at the time of the initial rockfall. The woman was flown out of the park with serious injuries. All other people in the area have been accounted for and search efforts have concluded.

Rockfalls are a common occurrence in Yosemite Valley. The park records about 80 rockfalls per year, but many more go unreported. The rockfall from El Capitan was similar in size and extent to other rockfalls that have occurred throughout the park.

It has been 18 years since the last rockfall-related fatality in Yosemite National Park. In that incident, rock climber Peter Terbush was killed by a rockfall from Glacier Point on June 13, 1999. There have now been 16 fatalities and more than 100 injuries from rockfalls since park records began in 1857.

Source: [Yosemite NP](#).

## **Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks Searchers Find Missing Hiker**

Missing hiker Edward "Hall" Newbegin was spotted from a search helicopter in Sequoia National Park on Saturday, September 30th. He was hiking towards Mineral King on the Franklin Lakes Trail, approximately two-and-a-half miles east of the trailhead. Rangers contacted him, confirmed that he was uninjured, and provided an escort out of the wilderness to reunite with his family.

Newbegin's party departed from the Sawtooth Trailhead in Mineral King on Monday, September 25th. He was reported missing after separating from them on Wednesday and failing to arrive at an expected rendezvous point.

A common factor in many search and rescue operations is individuals hiking alone or separating from their party. Hikers are strongly advised to stay together, stick to their planned itinerary, and let someone know when they return from their trip.

Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon NPs](#).

## **Colorado National Monument Cyclist Killed During Tour Ride Through Park**

One rider in the Icon Eyecare Tour of the Moon bicycle ride died in an accident this past Saturday while several other riders suffered from hypothermia due to a heavy thunderstorm that crossed the park.

The 64-year-old woman, one of 2,800 riders in the race, was descending the east hill and lost control of her bike. The accident was unwitnessed, but high speed was not considered to be a contributing factor.

According to the park's chief ranger, a number of riders had a tough time dealing with the rain squall that blew through the monument, and a few were treated for hypothermia.

Sources: [CBS Denver](#) and the [Grand Junction Daily Sentinel](#).

## **Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area Man Convicted Of Assaulting Ranger**

At the conclusion of a two-day trial last week, a jury found Damari Roulhac, 26, guilty of assaulting and fleeing from a ranger. The charges arose from a hit-and-run incident that took place in the park on July 1, 2016.

Evidence presented during the trial showed that rangers patrolling the park that evening encountered Roulhac and ordered him to stop his vehicle. Roulhac refused to obey and instead accelerated his vehicle towards one of the rangers, causing him to jump out of the way. Roulhac then resisted the officers' attempts to detain him and accelerated again, striking one of the rangers with his vehicle while fleeing the scene of the incident.

Though Roulhac initially evaded apprehension, rangers located and took him into custody days later at the Pike County Courthouse, where he was being sentenced for an unrelated DUI conviction.

The case was investigated park rangers and was prosecuted by the US Attorney's Office, Middle District of Pennsylvania. Sentencing will take place at a later date.

Source: [NPS Investigative Services Branch](#).

### **Rocky Mountain National Park Climber Killed In Fall On Batman Pinnacle**

Henry Gholz, 66, was killed in a 50-foot fall while climbing the Batman and Robin Route on Batman Pinnacle in the Lumpy Ridge area of the park on the afternoon of Saturday, September 30th.

Bystanders began CPR on him and arriving rangers employed additional life support measures, but efforts to revive him proved unavailing.

An investigation is underway.

Source: [The Coloradoan](#).

### **National Fire Situation**

#### **National Interagency Fire Center National Preparedness Level Drops To PL 2**

##### **Synopsis**

NIFC has downgraded the national preparedness level to PL 2

The large fires currently being reported have so far burned more than 446,000 acres in four western states. Cooler temperatures and some precipitation has helped firefighters make progress toward containment goals.

More than 550 people are helping with hurricane recovery efforts in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico. Here's a snapshot of the overall commitment as of yesterday:

- Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA – IMT 1 (McGowan) has been tasked with establishment of an incident support base for the receipt and distribution of commodities, supplies and resources. IMT 2 (Zombro) is coordinating with other agencies to plan and prioritize emergency road clearing. FDNY IMT 2 (Kane) has been tasked with assessment of damage to critical infrastructure including roads, water systems and communications.
- Hurricane Maria, U.S Virgin Islands, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) – IMT 2 (Bird) has mobilized to St. Croix and is managing a logistical staging area for incoming responders while preparing for FEMA operations. IMT 2 (Parrish) has mobilized to St. Thomas and is supporting the receiving and distribution of emergency commodities to aid in the relief efforts.
- Hurricane Harvey, Texas A&M Forest Service – Texas IMT 2 (Hanneman) has mobilized to College Station, Texas, to support recovery and mitigation efforts, surveying impacts on local fire departments and distributing donated fire equipment.
- Hurricane Irma, South Florida Parks, National Park Service – IMT 2 (Foust) is overseeing site assessment, debris cleanup and emergency stabilization within national parks in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina.

#### **Active Incident Resource Commitments**

| <b>Category</b> | <b>September 19th</b> | <b>September 26th</b> | <b>October 3rd</b> |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|

|                    |        |       |       |
|--------------------|--------|-------|-------|
|                    |        |       |       |
| Area Command Teams | 1      | 0     | 0     |
| NIMO Teams         | 3      | 2     | 0     |
| Type 1 Teams       | 7      | 2     | 1     |
| Type 2 Teams       | 26     | 12    | 9     |
| Crews              | 346    | 222   | 70    |
| Engines            | 733    | 374   | 167   |
| Helicopters        | 147    | 51    | 21    |
| Total FF/Overhead  | 16,007 | 9,414 | 3,828 |
|                    |        |       |       |

### **Fires/Acreage**

| <b>Category</b>    | <b>2017 Total</b> | <b>2006-2016 Ave</b> | <b>2017 Variance</b> |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Year-to-Date Fires | 49,563            | 55,617               | - 6,054              |
| Year-to-Date Acres | 8,422,251         | 5,915,728            | + 2,506,523          |
|                    |                   |                      |                      |

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 27th, the Subcommittee on National Parks of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held a hearing to examine ways of encouraging the next generation to visit national parks. Lena McDowall, Deputy Director for Management and Administration, National Park Service, was the witness for the Department of the Interior. Among other witnesses was Will Shafroth, president and chief executive officer of the National Park Foundation.

#### **The House**

On October 3rd, the House Committee on Natural Resources will hold a hearing on H.R. 3400 (Bishop, R-UT), a bill "to promote innovative approaches to outdoor recreation on Federal land and to open up opportunities for collaboration with non-Federal partners, and for other purposes." The bill is otherwise known as the "Recreation Not Red-Tape Act." Testifying will be Senator Rob Wyden (D-OR), former Congressman Nick Rahall (D-WV), Louis Geltman of the Outdoor Alliance, Brian Merrill of Western River Expeditions, and Kevin Heiner of the Southwest Conservation Corps. The hearing will be held at 10 a.m. in 1334 Longworth House Office Building.

Later on October 3rd, the same committee will mark up the following bills:

- H.R. 210 (Rep. Don Young of AK), To facilitate the development of energy on Indian lands by reducing Federal regulations that impede tribal development of Indian lands, and for other purposes. "Native American Energy Act"
- H.R. 424 (Rep. Collin Peterson), 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, and for other purposes. "Gray Wolf State Management Act of 2017"

- H.R. 717 (Rep. Pete Olson), 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, and for other purposes. "Listing Reform Act"
- H.R. 1274 (Rep. Dan Newhouse), 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, and for other purposes. "State, Tribal and Local Species Transparency and Recovery Act"
- H.R. 1488 (Rep. Peter Visclosky), To retitle Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore as Indiana Dunes National Park, and for other purposes. "The Indiana Dunes National Park Act"
- H.R. 2600 (Rep. David Young of IA), To provide for the conveyance to the State of Iowa of the reversionary interest held by the United States in certain land in Pottawattamie County, Iowa, and for other purposes.
- H.R. 2603 (Rep. Louie Gohmert), 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 for purposes. "Saving America's Endangered Species Act" or the "SAVES Act"
- H.R. 2897 (Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton), To authorize the Mayor of the District of Columbia and the Director of the National Park Service to enter into cooperative management agreements for the operation, maintenance, and management of units of the National Park System in the District of Columbia, and for other purposes.
- H.R. 3131 (Rep. Bill Huizenga), To amend the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to conform citizen suits under that Act with other existing law, and for other purposes. "Endangered Species Litigation Reasonableness Act"

The hearing will be held at 4 p.m. in 1334 Longworth House Office Building.

On October 4th, the full committee will continue mark-up of the above bills at 10 a.m. in 1334 Longworth House Office Building.

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

#### **NPS Retirees**

#### **Passing Of Dr. Rod Norum**

Dr. Rod Norum, formerly of the NPS fire office at the National Interagency Fire Center, died on September 22nd in Victor, Montana. We don't yet have any further details, except an address to send condolences to his wife: Melanie Miller, PO Box 835, Victor, MT 59875. More information will appear when and if it becomes available.

You can watch a video of Rod posted to the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center's YouTube site talking about how he "faced the challenge of a major fire burning toward the Alaska Pipeline, including a 'monster' tactical 26-mile-long backfire":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oLTxhLQd-E>

Source: Members Paul Broyles and Mike Warren.

#### **Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area Superintendent John Donahue To Retire**

Superintendent John Donahue, 64, will retire from the NPS on December 3rd, capping off a 38-year federal career that took him to national park units in different roles. He has served as superintendent at the park since 2003.

Donahue's early jobs included delivering newspapers, driving a New York City cab, digging graves in a cemetery, working as a gardener, and working in New York City's parks departments. He earned a degree in environmental studies and planning at California State University.

Before coming to Delaware Water Gap, Donahue served in various roles within the federal system. He was superintendent of Big Cypress National Preserve and Desoto National Memorial in Florida, George Washington Birthplace National Monument in Virginia, and Thomas Stone National Historic Site in Maryland.

Donahue started his career as a permanent employee as a gardener with the U.S. government, first at Cape Cod National Seashore and later at John Muir National Historic Site. He has also served as a special assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Fish Wildlife and Parks in the Department of Interior and as an environmental specialist in the Washington Office. He also held positions as the chief of resource management and visitor services at Cape Cod National Seashore and as a resource manager at Morristown National Historical Park.

Source: [The Pocono Record](#).

## **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** – Westwise, the blog for the Center for Western Priorities, “a watchdog group focused on national parks, monuments, public lands, and energy in the American West,” has posted excerpts from an interview with Secretary Zinke in which he blames “the resistance movement” for causing the delays in confirming 14 of 17 of the DOI appointees requiring Senate approval. It also notes that Zinke hasn't even nominated people for ten of those positions. [Full story](#). Thanks to member Deb Liggett for passing this along.
- **Department of the Interior** – Not everyone agrees with the secretary regarding his previously reported comments about disloyal employees. A Montana-based group called the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, which calls itself “the sportsmen's voice for our wild public lands, waters and wildlife,” issued a press release in response to Zinke's accusations. Here's a quote from its director: “In my 17 years of working in this field – including close to five years at BHA – I never once have questioned the patriotism of our public land managers. While we don't always agree on policy, their commitment – to our country, their jobs and, fundamentally, to our visionary approach to natural resources management in America – never wavers.” [Full story](#).
- **Department of the Interior** – Meanwhile, the website Politico has posted a story entitled “Interior Watchdog Opens Investigation Into Zinke's Travel.” The IG's office is looking into his use of “taxpayer-funded charter planes” after receiving “numerous complaints” about same. [Full story](#). Sent in by member Joan Anzelmo.



- **National Park System** – On September 26th, HowStuffWorks posted a podcast entitled “Hundreds Have Vanished from National Parks. Is Bigfoot to Blame?” As humorist Dave Barry would say, no, I’m not making this up. It contains an interview with former police detective and author of the “Missing 411” series David Paulides regarding people disappearing “mysteriously” in national parks: “These mysterious circumstances have led some to theorize these are abductions made by Bigfoot, or some other large animal or wild man (like the Wendigo). One family recounted a story of watching a little girl walk into the forest only to vanish with no trace. Could these missing people have come upon portals to other dimensions? Some think that’s a possibility, too.” [Full story](#).
- **National Park System** – The *New York Times* ran a story on overcrowding in the national parks last week with this headline: “National Parks Struggle With a Mounting Crisis: Too Many Visitors.” It focuses primarily on Zion National Park and the possibility that a system will be developed whereby people have to make reservations in order to visit the park. Here’s a telling observation from the article about the impacts of overcrowding on both visitors and staff: “[Some people recently] showed up for a vacation they had planned for months, spent a day in the gridlock and turned around. Rangers, stressed by the frustrated masses, have started a monthly meeting to discuss ‘visitor use’ that some say has turned into a group-therapy session.” [Full story](#). Sent along by member Joan Anzelmo.
- **Alaskan Preserves** – The *Alaska Dispatch News* has a story in Monday’s edition on a court ruling regarding the Service’s authority on rivers in Alaska’s preserves: “The National Park Service can ban hovercrafts in Alaska’s national preserves, a federal appeals court ruled Monday. The decision is the latest blow for Alaska moose hunter John Sturgeon, 72, in a decade-long fight that made it all the way to the Supreme Court in 2016. A three-judge panel on the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Monday that the National Park Service has authority over [a] river within [Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve].” [Full story](#). Thanks to Deb Liggett for passing this on.
- **Chaco Culture National Historical Park** – The September 27th issue of *The New Mexican* has a story on how “leaders of a dozen New Mexican pueblos are asking the federal government to stop all new oil and gas development near sacred sites surrounding Chaco Culture National Historical Park.” They believe that a moratorium is necessary “to preserve sacred archeological sites, protect views and maintain the darkness of the sky at Chaco,” which is also a World Heritage Site. [Full story](#). Submitted by member Ann Rasor.
- **Redwood/Giant Sequoia Parks** – On September 26th, the *San Francisco Chronicle* ran an article entitled “Genetic Probe Of Redwoods, Giant Sequoias Is Key To Restoring Forests.” Excerpt: “Scientists affiliated with the nonprofit Save the Redwoods League are attempting for the first time to sequence the genomes of coast redwood trees and their higher-elevation cousins, the giant sequoias, a complex and expensive undertaking that experts hope will help preserve the trees’ ancient groves as the climate changes over the next century.” [Full story](#). Courtesy of member Dennis Burnett.

## 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:

- **Olympic National Park** – The public comment period for the draft mountain goat management plan EIS has been extended to October 10th to allow more time for



comments from the area where park goats would be relocated under the draft plan. [Peninsula Daily News](#).

- **Assateague Island National Seashore** – A loggerhead sea turtle recently spawned about 100 hatchlings in the park, its first confirmed loggerhead sea turtle hatch and the largest number of hatchlings ever recorded. Loggerheads typically nest on sandy beaches from North Carolina to Florida; it's rare for them to nest north of Virginia. [Assateague Island NS](#).
- **Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site** – The park's visitor center will be closed from October 2nd through October 16th. During the closure, important facility maintenance work will take place, including cleaning the building's HVAC system, removing and reinstalling wall panels and repairing and resealing the ceiling and floor. [Martin Luther King Jr. NHS](#).
- **Mount Rushmore National Park** – The Blackberry Trail was reopened in a ceremony on September 26th. The equestrian and hiking trail, which connects with the Centennial Trail in the Black Elk Wilderness in Black Hills National Forest, was closed in May 2016 for repair and rehabilitation. [Mount Rushmore NP](#).

## **Systemwide Upcoming Events**

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

- **October 3** – The House Committee on Natural Resources will hold a hearing on H.R. 3400 (Bishop), a bill “to promote innovative approaches to outdoor recreation on Federal land and to open up opportunities for collaboration with non-Federal partners, and for other purposes.” 10 a.m., 1334 Longworth House Office Building.
- **October 3** – The House Committee on Natural Resources will mark-up a number of pending bills (see above for details). 4 p.m., 1334 Longworth House Office Building.
- **October 4** – The House Committee on Natural Resources will continue the session begun on the afternoon of October 3rd. 10 a.m., 1334 Longworth House Office Building.
- **October 18-22** – Ranger Rendezvous 40, Association of National Park Rangers, YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park, Colorado. [More information](#).

## **A Closing Observation**

“When you're standing there silently in the presence of the giant sequoias, you can't help but recognize that you're a part of something that is way beyond whatever it is that you envisioned this world might be. You can't stand there, all alone, without understanding that there's a power in the world that is far greater than anything that you've ever experienced, and that you're connected to that power just as that sequoia is connected to that power. It permeates all of us. And when you understand that, it improves your relationship with your fellow man. Because you realize that he has the same capacity, he has the same access, he is your brother.”

[Director George Hartzog](#) in Ken Burns' *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*.

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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 member Steve Pittleman.

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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