



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

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Incidents

Southeast Region Hurricane Recovery Operations Continue

Post-hurricane recovery operations continue in several parks as crews remove hazardous branches and clear trails and roads. Though many employees from across the nation are returning to their home parks, local crews continue to prepare parks for the upcoming winter season. Every park is at least partially open at this time, with further progress expected this week.

Big Cypress National Preserve – The park is partially open:

- The Oasis Visitor Center is open from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily.
- Midway, Monument, and Burns Lake campgrounds are open.
- The Swamp Welcome Center remains closed for repairs.
- The Stairsteps Unit remains closed to all recreational access, including hunting, until water levels go down; other backcountry areas are open.
- The Loop Road is closed.

Everglades National Park – The park is partially open:

- The Homestead visitor entrance is open as far as Flamingo, but no facilities are open. Portable rest rooms are available. Boats may now be launched at the Flamingo ramps. Night closures will remain in place. The roadway is open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. A nighttime closure is in place at West Lake. Gas and food services are not available. Utility crews continue to stabilize water treatment facilities in Flamingo. Construction crews continue to stabilize facilities in Flamingo. Saw crews are removing damaged limbs and trees from Flamingo campground.
- Large park signs along the main road are being reinstalled.
- Park boat operators continue marking underwater debris navigation hazards and displaced vessels in park waters.
- Shark Valley remains closed due to high water; the area will be monitored for future mitigations, should they be needed to protect infrastructure.
- Gulf Coast facilities remain closed until further notice.

Cumberland Island National Seashore – The park is partially open:

- The Cumberland Island Mainland Museum is open.
- The visitor center is closed.
- Arborist crews have completed their work and are moving to Fort Matanzas.
- Camping reservations are cancelled through November 1st.
- The managed hunt that was scheduled for October 28th and 29th has been cancelled.

Fort Matanzas National Monument – The park is partially open:

- The visitor center area remains closed pending removal of hazard limbs and trees.
- Arborists should arrive today to work on hazard limbs and trees.
- Beach and Island areas of the park are open to the public.
- The fort will remain inaccessible to the public until repairs to dock and ferry boats can be completed.

Fort Pulaski National Monument – The park is open:

- The visitor center and museum are open.
- The water system is not operating in the historic area of the park. Water is not available in and around Fort Pulaski and the visitor center comfort station is closed. Portable restrooms are available.

For updates on the status of all parks, click on [this link](#).

Source: [IMT Update, October 9, 2017](#).

Gulf Island National Seashore Park Closed Due To Damage From Hurricane Nate

The park remains closed following the passage of Hurricane Nate due to damage inflicted on facilities. As of this past Monday, here's how things stood:

- Fort Pickens – A significant amount of sand and water, up to two feet deep in place, remains on the roadway and parking areas, which have been damaged in some locations. The Fort Pickens campground has standing water; all reservations through Wednesday night have been cancelled. Those with reservations are being contacted.
- Santa Rosa – Highway 399, J. Earle Bowden Way, has been damaged by significant overwash from the gulf, and a significant amount of sand and water remains on the roadway. It is closed; road crews will begin clearing debris and sand as soon as it's safe to do so. The Opal Beach facilities and parking lots have significant standing water, which will need to recede before the area can be reopened.
- Okaloosa – The area will remain closed until standing water recedes.
- Naval Live Oaks, Fort Barrancas and Johnson Beach at Perdido Key – All have reopened, but parts of the Johnson Beach Road will remain closed until sand and debris are removed.

The park's incident management team continues to oversee post-storm recovery efforts. Park status updates will be posted online at www.nps.gov/GulfIslands, www.Facebook.com/GulfIslandsNPS, and www.Twitter.com/GulfIslandsNPS.

Source: [Gulf Islands National Seashore](#).

Manassas National Battlefield Park

Stonewall Jackson Memorial Vandalized

Park staff are currently working to remove paint that was poured and sprayed on the General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson monument. The vandalism happened overnight and was discovered at approximately 6:30 a.m. on Wednesday, October 4th.

Vandals poured a large quantity of white paint on three of the four sides of the polished granite base and “Dead!!!” was painted in gold spray paint. Rangers are investigating the incident; anyone with information is asked to call 301-714-2235.

NPS preservation experts have started to remove the paint from the monument and are assessing the best methods to remove remaining paint, oils and residue.

The monument was erected in 1940 at the site where Jackson first received the nickname “Stonewall,” at the First Battle of Manassas on July 21, 1861.

Source: [Manassas NBP \(includes photo\)](#).

Kings Canyon National Park Bodies Of Missing Couple Found In Car Wreck

A Fresno County sheriff's search and rescue team has recovered the bodies of a San Diego couple trapped in a car that crashed off a cliff in Kings Canyon National Park in August.

Jie Song, 32, and her husband, Yinan Wang, 31, had been reported missing on August 11th by a family member who became alarmed when the couple disappeared while on vacation. They were last seen at the Crystal Caves in Sequoia National Park on August 6th.

Wang, a Chinese national, had lived in San Diego for about a year. Song lived in China and visited her husband several times a year.

The car was spotted in August while officials were trying to retrieve another car that had plummeted 500 feet after plowing through a highway guardrail on July 26th. Two exchange students from Thailand had been in that car, which came to rest on boulders in the river. Their bodies were recovered in September.

Song and Wang's car was found because a deputy watching a TV report on the recovery of the Thai students and their car spotted a license plate lying in the brush that didn't belong to their rental car. That led to a helicopter search of the area and the discovery of Song and Wang's car, which was deeply submerged underwater.

Heavy winter rains created high water levels in the river that made it too dangerous to try to examine the wreckage closely or retrieve the bodies until recently. The amount of water now flowing in that portion of the river is down nearly 10 times from what it was in early August.

The two cars apparently crashed about 50 feet from each other along a winding road. It's believed to be a coincidence that both cars crashed in the same area within weeks of each other.

Source: [San Diego Union-Tribune](#).

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center NIFC Focuses On California Fires, Hurricane Recovery

Synopsis

NIFC is at PL 2, the next to lowest of five preparedness levels.

Little new activity was reported yesterday. Thirteen large fires are burning in northern California. None are contained. Four Type 1 incident management teams and 2,325 firefighters and overhead personnel are committed. For more information on these fires, go to Cal Fire's [incident information webpage](#) or to their [statewide fire summary](#).

The majority of personnel and teams currently committed are involved with hurricane support in Florida, Texas, Puerto Rico and the Virgin islands.

Active Incident Resource Commitments

Category	September 26th	October 3rd	October 10th
Area Command Teams	0	0	0
NIMO Teams	2	0	0
Type 1 Teams	2	1	5
Type 2 Teams	12	9	4
Crews	222	70	103
Engines	374	167	380
Helicopters	51	21	33
Total FF/Overhead	9,414	3,828	4,273

Fires/Acreage

Category	2017 Total	2006-2016 Ave	2017 Variance
Year-to-Date Fires	50,283	55,951	- 5,668
Year-to-Date Acres	8,469,590	6,004,222	+ 2,465,368

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 October 4th, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs approved the following, among other bills:

- S. 1887, to grant direct hiring authority to the head of any agency to appoint in the competitive service, at the GS-11 or below levels, college graduates within two years of their completion of a baccalaureate or graduate degree. The bill provides a similar time-limited authority for post-secondary students pursuing a baccalaureate or graduate degree also allowing those students to be converted into the competitive service upon

completion of their degree, the completion of 640 hours of continuous employment, and upon meeting the qualifications for the position to which they will be converted. During a fiscal year, the head of any agency may appoint under this authority not more than a number equal to 15 percent of the total number of individuals appointed under the competitive service in the previous fiscal year. This number may be lowered by the director of the Office of Personnel Management.

- S. 1886, to grant non-competitive authority to the head of any agency in the competitive service for a temporary appointment for a period of not more than one year, which can be extended up to two additional years, and for term appointments for a period of not more than five years, which can be extended up to an additional five years. Additionally, the head of any agency may make a noncompetitive temporary appointment, or a noncompetitive term appointment for a period of not more than 18 months, to a position in the competitive service for which a critical hiring need exists; however, these appointments may not be extended.
- S. 1888, to increase the maximum amount of a Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment from \$25,000 to \$40,000 and to include an annual adjustment in accordance with the Consumer Price Index.
- S. 1769, to require a new or updated federal website intended for use by the public to be configured in such a way that the website may be navigated and viewed on a smart phone, tablet computer, or similar mobile device.
- S. 1869, to reauthorize and rename the position of Whistleblower Ombudsman to be the Whistleblower Protection Coordinator with the responsibility of educating employees about the means by which employees may seek review of any allegation of reprisal, including the roles of the Office of the Inspector General, the Office of Special Counsel, the Merit Systems Protection Board, and any other relevant entities; and to assist the Inspector General in promoting the timely and appropriate handling and consideration of protected disclosures and allegations of reprisal.
- H.R. 70, to modify and update the requirements applicable to federal advisory committees under the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

On October 5th, the Committee on the Budget approved the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2018.

The House

On October 2nd, the House passed these bills:

- H.R. 965, to redesignate the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site as the Saint-Gaudens National Historical Park, by a vote of 401 yeas to 0 nays;
- H.R. 289, to amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to specify the circumstances under which the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture may issue special recreation permits and charge fees for specialized individual and group use of federal facilities, lands, and waters. Most of this revised authority applies to the Forest Service and the BLM, but the general authority to issue permits and charge fees also applies to NPS.

On October 3rd, the House Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing on H.R. 3400, the Recreation Not Red-Tape Act. Among other provisions, the bill would:

- allow for the sale of federal land recreation passes along with the sale of state land recreation passes in one transaction;
- require federal land management agencies to sell on-line entrance passes and to allow on-line payment of standard amenity fees;

- encourage the federal land management agencies to work with the Defense and Veteran Affairs departments to ensure service members and veterans have access to outdoor recreation and to allow them up to 7 days of service to participate in a program of environmental stewardship or guided outdoor recreation;
- encourage federal land management agencies to identify ways to extend the recreation seasons in their land management planning processes; and
- require the development of an interagency trail management plan across federal agencies to ensure uniform management and maintenance.

There was no witness from the Department of the Interior at this hearing.

On October 4th, the Committee on Natural Resources approved the following bills:

- H.R. 424, to require the Department of the Interior to reissue two rules that removed protections under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 for the gray wolf populations located in Wyoming and the western Great Lakes (all of Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota, as well as portions of North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio). In addition, this bill prohibits judicial review of the reissued rules.
- H.R. 717, to amend the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to allow the Department of the Interior or the Department of Commerce, as appropriate, to prioritize the consideration of petitions to list a species as endangered or threatened other than in the order in which the petitions are received; to change the deadline to decide on whether or not a petition to list or remove a species should be granted is changed from within 12 months to as expeditiously as possible; and to authorize the appropriate department to preclude the listing of a species as threatened due to the likelihood of significant, cumulative economic effects that would result from such listing or from the likely resulting designation of critical habitat of the species. Once a petition is precluded due to those economic effects, the appropriate department may not reconsider that finding unless the department: (1) determines there is endangerment or extinction of the species; or (2) receives a new petition to add the species to the list that includes an analysis concluding that alternative actions are possible other than those resulting in significant, cumulative economic effects.
- H.R. 1274, to amend the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to require the Department of the Interior or the Department of Commerce, as appropriate, to provide to affected states all data that is used as the basis of a determination on whether a species is an endangered species or a threatened species before making a determination. Also, the appropriate department must use data submitted by a state, tribal, or county government in making such a determination
- H.R. 1488, to rename Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore as Indiana Dunes National Park.
- H.R. 2600, 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.
- 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 for purposes of that Act.
- H.R. 2897, 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.
- H.R. 3131, to amend the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to replace the current standard for awarding court costs, including attorney fees, in citizen suits with the federal judicial code standard for awarding costs to a prevailing party.

On October 5th, the House approved H. Con. Res. 71, establishing the congressional budget for the United States government for fiscal year 2018 and setting forth the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2019 through 2027, by a vote of 219 yeas to 206 nays.

On October 5th, Rep. Bishop, chair of the full committee, and Rep. Westerman, chair of its oversight and investigation subcommittee, sent a letter to the principal deputy solicitor for the Department of the Interior expressing concern about recent media reports “based on at least four instances of improper disclosure of internal Department of the Interior documents.” The four documents cited were:

- A memo from Secretary Zinke for the President related to the Antiquities Act;
- A memo from acting Fish and Wildlife Service Director James Kurth related to geological and geophysical exploration regulations;
- A memo from acting National Park Service Director Michael Reynolds related to the Sportsmen's Heritage and Recreation Enhancement (SHARE) Act; and
- A draft notice of intent concerning Bureau of Land Management sage grouse habitat management plans.

The letter asks DOI to provide a briefing to the committee no later than October 12th on “policies and guidelines related to unauthorized disclosures of non-classified information,” and to provide copies of all DOI documents, policies and guidelines concerning such disclosures. The full letter can be read on the [Natural Resource Committee webpage](#).

On October 11th, the House Subcommittee on Federal Lands will hold a hearing on:

- H.R. 3373, to extend for an additional 50 years the lease under which the government of the District of Columbia uses the ground under and the parking facilities associated with Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium.
- H.R. 3607, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to establish fees for medical services provided in units of the National Park System

On October 11th, the full committee will hold a mark-up session on two bills pertaining to Antiquities Act reform:

- H.R. 3990 (Bishop), To amend title 54, United States Code, to reform the Antiquities Act of 1906, and for other purposes. “National Monument Creation and Protection Act.”
- H.Res. 555 (Grijalva), Of inquiry requesting the President and directing the Secretary of the Interior to transmit, respectively, certain documents and other information to the House of Representatives relating to the executive order on the review of designations under the Antiquities Act.

On October 12th, the House Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans will hold a hearing on H.R. 3916, a bill that would move responsibility from the secretary of commerce or the National Marine Fisheries Service to the secretary of the interior with respect to species of fish that spawn in fresh or estuarine waters and migrate to ocean waters, and species of fish that spawn in ocean waters and migrate to fresh waters.

Park People, Friends and Allies

Nothing this week.

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** – Several papers have reported on the resignation of DOI scientist Joel Clement, who blew the whistle on the Trump administration, claiming he was reassigned for warning about the dangers of climate change to Alaska natives. Here’s a portion of Clement’s letter that appeared in the *Huffington Post*: “Retaliating against civil servants for raising health and safety concerns is unlawful, but there are many items to add to your resume of failure,’ Clement wrote to Zinke. Those failures, he said, include ‘muzzling scientists and policy experts,’ conducting an ‘arbitrary and sloppy review of our treasured National Monuments,’ targeting an Obama-era conservation plan for the greater sage grouse, and compromising tribal sovereignty.” There’s much more, including a copy of his resignation letter. [Full story.](#)
- **Department of the Interior** – On October 5th, the *Washington Post* ran an article with this headline: “Notes From Closed Meeting Show How Interior Aims To Weaken Environmental Laws.” The author reported that BLM hosted a webinar on September 21st during which participants “discussed ways to water down NEPA” and, among other things, “about working around environmental analyses that determine whether infrastructure projects harm ecosystems, about stripping conservation groups of the power to sue the BLM if it wrongly approves a project, and about limiting the number of federal Freedom of Information Act requests that allow the public to scrutinize how decisions were made.” [Full story.](#)
- **Everglades National Park** – The fall issue of *National Parks Magazine* has an article entitled “Vulture Vandals” which talks about the park’s ongoing efforts to keep vultures from attacking windshield wipers and other rubber parts on visitors’ vehicles. Why do they do it? Nobody’s quite sure, but it’s become a difficult problem to resolve. [Full story.](#)
- **National Park System** – The *Arizona Sun* on October 4th reported on two groups suing FAA to seek air tour plans for national parks. Excerpt: “The lawsuit said the National Park Air Tour Management Act of 2000 requires the FAA to prepare an air tour plan, or develop voluntary agreements with air tour operators, whenever someone applies for permission to conduct a commercial air tour over a park. A 2012 law created an exemption for parks with fewer than 50 flights per year. But the complaint, filed in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C, said the FAA hasn’t created plans for any park since the law was passed 17 years ago.” [Full story.](#)
- **Mexican Border Federal Lands** – The *Washington Times* reported last week that successful border enforcement is saving habitat and increasing visitor security at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument and in other forests and refuges along the Mexican border. Excerpt: “Organ Pipe is one of the success stories of the border, where a combination of stiffer enforcement, changing migration patterns and a new spirit of cooperation between federal agencies has produced gains unimaginable just a few years ago.” [Full story.](#)

Systemwide Notes On Park Operations

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

- **Acadia National Park** – The park’s Foundation Document is now available online. Foundation documents serve as the underlying guidance for all management and planning decisions in parks. Acadia’s describes the core mission of the park by identifying its purpose, significance, fundamental and important resources and values, interpretive themes, planning needs, special mandates, and administrative commitments. [Full story](#).
- **Grand Canyon National Park** – The park has permanently closed the yurt located at CC Hill on the North Rim over safety concerns. The yurt is scheduled for demolition later this fall. [Full story](#).
- **Manassas National Battlefield Park** – The historic Stone Bridge, located near the site where the first shots were fired during the first battle of the Civil War, is getting a major facelift. Construction to stabilize the bridge foundation, repair historic stone masonry and repave the surface began on Monday and is expected to wrap up in January. The bridge will remain open during most of the work. [Full story](#).
- **War in the Pacific National Historical Park** – Rehabilitation has begun on the historic Type C Japanese midget submarine located at the T. Stell Newman Visitor Center. It is the only Type C submarine in existence and was captured in August 1944. The work should be completed by year’s end. [Full story](#).

Acknowledgements

This short section will appear weekly to acknowledge the people who have sent in tips and articles for the current edition, or have otherwise helped in its preparation and dissemination.

First off, the “regulars” – Thanks to Steve Pittleman, who takes the Word version of this newsletter and transforms it into both an email message and a web entry, and to Don Hellman, who keeps tabs on Congress and sends along a weekly report on actions there.

As for this issue, thanks to Joan Anzelmo, Dennis Burnett, Cathy Halainen, and Deb Liggett for sending along articles or news tips.

A Closing Observation

"Wilderness is an anchor to windward. Knowing it is there, we can also know that we are still a rich nation, tending our resources as we should — not a people in despair searching every last nook and cranny of our land for a board of lumber, a barrel of oil, a blade of grass, or a tank of water."

[Senator Clinton P. Anderson](#) (D-NM)

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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.”

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