



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

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Incidents

Natchez Trace Parkway Two Sentenced For Theft Of Government Property

Two Mississippi men pled guilty to theft of government property last month and have been sentenced to terms in prison, probation and restitution.

In March, 2016, park maintenance employees found several items missing from the maintenance facility located in Dancy, Mississippi. Additional items were taken from the same facility in July, including a hydraulic winch valued at over \$10,000. In August, Clay County and Oktibbeha County law enforcement officers arrested three suspects, including Easley and Williams, on charges of arson and theft in a series of crimes that spanned several counties. Clay County investigators contacted rangers with information connecting Easley and Williams to the park thefts.

Rangers worked with officers from the two counties in executing search warrants and recovered several items, including the missing winch. Based on the information provided by county investigators and the Mississippi Agricultural and Livestock Theft Bureau, Easley and Williams were interviewed about the stolen property. Both confessed and provided detailed information about the two break-ins.

In January, rangers presented the case before a grand jury in Oxford, Mississippi, and obtained a felony indictment against the two men for theft of government property; both pled guilty to the charge in June. Williams was sentenced in September to time served, three years' probation, and ordered to pay \$848.50 in restitution. Easley was sentenced early last month to 12 months and one day of incarceration, followed by three years of supervised probation, and ordered to pay the \$2516.15 in restitution.

Source: [News release](#), Natchez Trace Parkway

Rocky Mountain National Park Injured Climber Rescued From Mount Lady Washington

On the morning of Sunday, October 29th, Megan Kies, 31, of Lafayette, Colorado, was climbing the Martha's Couloir route on Mount Lady Washington when she was struck by a rock that

had been dislodged above her and sustained life-threatening injuries. Climbers in the area notified park staff of the incident via cell phone.

Kies' climbing partner and two other climbers in the area provided aid to Kies. She was roped in when the incident happened and they were able to then lower her. Another bystander provided updated information on her condition and location to park staff.

Park SAR team members arrived on scene at 2 p.m. They provided advanced life support care and placed Kies in a litter, then, with the assistance of bystanders, lowered her approximately 240 feet to the base of the route. From there, they lowered her an additional 100 feet to a location on the scree slope above Chasm Lake.

Due to her location and the severity of her injuries, rangers asked for assistance from the Colorado National Guard. They sent a helicopter to extricate her via a hoist operation, using a winch operated cable. A Flight for Life air ambulance flew Kies from the meadow to St. Anthony's Hospital in Denver.

Source: [News release with photo](#), Rocky Mountain NP.

Yellowstone National Park Former Child Care Center Director Sentenced For Embezzlement

Special agents were alerted this past January of the possible embezzlement of funds from a child care center in the park.

Following an investigation, Danielle Miles admitted to agents that she made unauthorized personal purchases using center funds. Miles is the former director of Little People's Learning Center, a private daycare located in Mammoth Hot Springs.

At a recent sentencing hearing in federal court, Miles was ordered to pay \$570 in restitution as well as a \$1,000 fine. She was also sentenced to serve 14 days in jail.

Source: [News release](#), Investigative Services Branch.

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park Women Killed In Fall Into Kilauea Caldera

Park rangers recovered the body of a 63-year-old Kea'au woman from Kilauea caldera below Steaming Bluff on the morning of October 29th.

At approximately 10 a.m. that morning, the park received a report that the woman had been missing since Friday. Family traced her phone to the park and rangers located her vehicle at the Steam Vents parking area. They then began a search for her by ground and air. At around 11:30 a.m., the woman's body was located by personnel aboard a County of Hawai'i helicopter about 250 feet below the caldera rim and was removed.

The woman apparently died in a fall from the crater edge beyond Crater Rim Trail. The area where she fell is not currently erupting. It appeared that she left the trail and went around several barriers to reach the edge.

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

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 White House

The president has signed to bills into law:

- P.L. 115-72, to provide additional supplemental appropriations for disaster relief requirements, which includes \$577 million for wildland fire suppression activities. Signed into law on October 26th.
- P.L. 115-73, to provide greater whistleblower protections for Federal employees, increased awareness of Federal whistleblower protections, and increased accountability and required discipline for Federal supervisors who retaliate against whistleblowers. Signed into law on October 26th.

The Senate

On October 31st, the Senate passed:

- S. Res. 315, designating November 4, 2017, as National Bison Day, and
- S. Res. 316, recognizing National Native American Heritage Month and celebrating the heritages and cultures of Native Americans and the contributions of Native Americans to the United States.

On October 31st, the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard concluded a hearing to examine Native American subsistence rights and international treaties. There was no witness from the Department of the Interior at the hearing.

The House

On November 1st, the House passed:

- 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, and
- H.R. 1488, to rename Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore as Indiana Dunes National Park.

On November 2nd, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee approved:

- H.R. 4182, to modify the probationary period from one year to two years for certain positions within the competitive service and the Senior Executive Service;
- H.R. 1132, to prohibit an individual employed in a political position in the civil service from being appointed to a career position in the civil service for two years after the individual separates from such political position; however, the prohibition shall not apply to a political appointee who has not personally and substantially participated in any particular matter while employed in a political position; and
- H.R. 4043, to reauthorize the whistleblower protection program.

Park People, Friends and Allies

National Park Service

Passing Of Richard Sellars

Retired NPS historian Richard West Sellars died peacefully at his home in Santa Fe on November 1st after a struggle with Alzheimer's disease.

Born in Decatur, Texas, in 1935, he was the son of wildcatter oilman Robert Thompson Sellars, Sr., and schoolteacher Johnnie Mae Blankenship Sellars, and grew up knowing the security of a multigenerational network of relatives and friends in that small town. He left there to attend Baylor University, graduating with a degree in geology in 1957.

After a few years as an independent oilman in Jackson, Mississippi, he realized that his interests actually lay more in history, geography, and literature. He furthered his education in these fields at North Texas State University and the University of Missouri-Columbia, earning a doctorate in Western history in 1972.

Although his goal had originally been to teach at the college level, he immediately found employment with the National Park Service upon receiving his degree. He soon wholeheartedly embraced a career that afforded not only intellectual analysis of National Park Service historical and natural park units, but also interesting travel – he would eventually visit at least 350 NPS sites.

From 1979 to 1988, he headed the Service's Southwest Cultural Resources Center in Santa Fe, overseeing programs in history, archaeology, and historic architecture for the Southwest Region and Servicewide programs in submerged cultural resources. He served as acting superintendent at Pea Ridge National Military Park and San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, and was also a consultant with the Dallas County Historical Foundation on preservation and interpretation of the Texas School Book Depository and Dealey Plaza in Dallas, Texas, site of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

But it was in writing and lecturing that he found the greatest satisfaction. His articles on American history and cultural and natural resource preservation appeared in numerous publications and he frequently taught courses on preservation philosophy, policy, and practice and historic preservation at National Park Service training centers and various universities. He is best known as the author of *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History*, published in 1997 by Yale University Press and the chief catalyst for a major initiative by the National Park Service to revitalize natural resource management in the parks.

After his retirement in 2008, he worked on a history of cultural resources management in the National Park Service, which remains unfinished. His achievements were recognized by the National Park Service and related organizations with the Eastern National Authors Award in 1997, the George P. Hartzog Award and the U.S. Department of the Interior Meritorious Service Award in 2008, and the George Melendez Wright Award for Excellence in 2011. He will be remembered for his unwavering commitment to preservation principles and devotion to the National Park Service.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his brother, Robert Thompson Sellars, Jr. Surviving members of his family include his sister, Sally Florian, and her husband James, sister-in-law Sharon Sellars, cousin Ben Man and his wife Karen, in-laws Robert and Alice Stevenson, nieces Amanda Callinan, Melinda ("Tenna") Florian, Kathryn Sellars, nephews Jason Florian and Trevor Stevenson, three great nieces, and his wife of forty years, Judith Stevenson Sellars.

The family extends its thanks to caregiver Glory Samlal for her superb care during Dick's final month and to PMS Hospice for their compassionate and competent efforts. There will be no

funeral, but a memorial service will be held in early 2018, and his ashes will be buried in the Sellars family plot in Decatur, Texas, at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, please direct any memorial donations to the George Wright Society, P.O. Box 65, Hancock, MI 49930-0065; Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), 962 Wayne Avenue, Suite 610, Silver Spring, MD 20910; or The Food Depot, 1222A Siler Road, Santa Fe, NM 87507-4107.

Source: [Obituary](#), *Santa Fe New Mexican*.

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.

- **Parks And Dark Skies** – The *Denver Post* ran an article on October 29th on the growing problem of light pollution invading previously dark night skies (a recent study found that more than half of Americans can no longer see the Milky Way) and the NPS efforts to preserve the last oases of darkness via International Dark Sky Association designations and related mitigation actions. Great Sand Dunes is featured, but other parks are also mentioned. [Full story](#).
- **Perspective On Golden Gate NRA Dog Management Flap** – The November 1st *San Francisco Chronicle* contains an opinion piece by Laura Pandapas, the co-founder of the Marin County Dog Owners Group, that takes the NPS to task for reputed misdeeds that occurred during the course of the long fight – now terminated – over dog management in the park. “The unraveling of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area’s dog management planning process after 14 years,” she says, “is a cautionary tale about what can happen when agencies try to rig a public process.” [Full story](#).
- **‘Women Take The Lead’** – The *Arizona Daily Sun* posted a story on November 5th entitled “Women Take The Lead For Northern Arizona’s Public Lands.” It focuses on the increasing number of women managers in the NPS and Forest Service, both locally in northern Arizona (the Grand Canyon, Flagstaff Area group and two national forests located there are all managed at present by women) and throughout both of the agencies. It talks about the potentially positive impact this change will have on decreasing sexual harassment in the agencies. [Full story](#).
- **Attacks Continue On Federal Wildlands** – On October 15th, the *Washington Post* ran a story with this headline: “Interior Looks At Behind-The-Scenes Land Swap To Allow Road Through Wildlife Refuge.” Here’s the lead paragraph: “The Interior Department is preparing to set aside a decades-old ban on development in federally protected wilderness areas by pursuing a controversial proposal to build a nearly 12-mile road through a wildlife refuge in Alaska.” The proposal for a road through the refuge has both opponents and supporters on its own merits, but it is the larger implication that is of concern: “Allowing the project would violate the founding principle of federal wilderness — areas that are to remain pristine, off-limits to vehicles — and would set a precedent that could endanger other refuges...” [Full story](#).
- **The Bundy Saga Continues** – The *Idaho Statesman* has reported on an interesting development in the trials of some of the men involved in the 2014 armed confrontation

with federal law enforcement officers: "U.S. Rep. Raul Labrador talked to Attorney General Jeff Sessions about looking into the prosecution, bail and sentences of four Idahoans caught up in the 2014 standoff between federal law enforcement officers, a Nevada rancher and 1,000 private militia members. The conversation came after the Idaho Republican wrote Sessions in support of a separate letter signed by more than 50 Idaho lawmakers that urged Sessions to stop the third trial of two men whose earlier trials ended in acquittals or deadlocked juries. He suggested 'a strong possibility that a miscarriage of justice is being committed.'" For additional details, see the [full story](#).

Systemwide Park Operations Update

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

- **Zion National Park** – Zion National Park has announced the signing of a bighorn sheep management FONSI, which will guide the management of the Zion desert bighorn sheep population "as a healthy herd and as part of a larger metapopulation." Decreasing the risk of disease transmission through population assessment, density reduction, and capture activities, will provide healthy sheep to supplement diminishing populations within the species' historic range. Source: [News release](#), Zion NP.
- **Natchez Trace Parkway** – The park and Tennessee Valley Authority are seeking public comment on an environmental assessment to establish a right-of-way for TVA to construct a new aerial transmission line across the parkway near Kosciusko, Mississippi. Comments are being accepted until December 2nd on the park's page on the [NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment webpage](#). Source: [News release](#), Natchez Trace Parkway.
- **Arches National Park** – Arches National Park is asking for comments on a traffic congestion management plan that it has developed to address vehicle traffic and parking congestion problems that affect visitor access, visitor enjoyment, and resource conditions. Visitation to the park has doubled over the past 11 years, reaching approximately 1.6 million visitors in 2016. During high-visitation season (March through October), visitors routinely wait in long lines to enter the park and then must search for empty parking spaces at all popular sites. Long lines to enter the park cause congestion at the intersection of U.S. 191 and the park entrance road, which can be a serious traffic hazard. The draft plan proposes a reservation system for entrance during high-visitation season and peak- visitation hours. Comments can be made on the park page on the [PEPC webpage](#) through December 4th. Source: [News release](#), Arches NP.

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A Closing Observation

"I recognize the fact that National Park Service programs stand out among the activities directed toward the attainment of citizen appreciation of our national heritage, and I agree that the national parks occupy an advantageous position in our social scheme, a position which makes them especially available as an aid in developing a national perspective in native values and democratic ways."

[Harold L. Ickes](#), Secretary of Interior, 1933-1946

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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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