

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

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Incidents

Southeast Region Sections Of Parks Reopen As Hurricane Recovery Operations Continue

Progress continues to be made in reopening areas impacted by this past summer's hurricanes and in restoring visitor services:

San Juan National Historic Site – Normal operations and public tours have resumed at the park's visitor center and the Castillo San Cristóbal area. Castillo San Felipe del Morro was scheduled to reopen this past Monday.

Big Cypress National Preserve – The Burns Lake, Bear Island, Pink Jeep and Gator Head campgrounds all reopened last week. Mitchell Landing, Pinecrest and Midway campgrounds remained closed due to higher than normal ground water levels. Loop Road remains closed to all non-local and through traffic. Although teams have completed vegetation and debris clearing along the scenic road, high water levels continue to make the road impassable. Improving conditions have also lead to reopening Zones 1 and 2 of the Stairsteps Unit to all recreational use, including hunting. Currently, Zones 3 and 4 of the Stairsteps Unit remain closed to all use.

Virgin Islands Parks – Christiansted National Historic Site and Buck Island Reef National Monument on the island of St. Croix and Trunk Bay Beach at Virgin Islands National Park on the island of St. John have reopened. In order to reopen Trunk Bay Beach, NPS staff had to stabilize numerous structures and remove fallen trees and more than 480 cubic yards of debris. Dive teams removed underwater debris from swimming areas. While these sites are open to visitors, many services and features at NPS sites across the islands remain closed or inaccessible while cleanup continues.

For continued updates on the status of national park areas in the Caribbean and elsewhere that have been affected by hurricanes and severe weather, please visit http://go.nps.gov/hurricanes.

Sources: <u>News release</u>, Big Cypress NP; <u>news release</u>, San Juan NHS; <u>news release</u>, Virgin Islands NP.

Olympic National Park "Cold Case" Conviction Made In 2001 Child Sexual Abuse Case

A man who committed aggravated sexual assault on a child in Olympic National Park in 2001 will serve more than eight years in prison. Charles Butcher, 46, will then serve 10 years of supervised release. He must also comply with DNA collection and lifetime sex offender registration.

"The nature of this offense is extremely odious," the federal judge said at the time of sentencing.

The victim and her mother reported the assault to local law enforcement in 2012. Butcher operated Log Cabin Resort within the park on Lake Crescent when the incident occurred.

A special agent with the Investigative Services Branch opened an investigation into this cold case, which was particularly sensitive due to the victim's young age at the time. Despite Butcher's denials, investigators were able to collect evidence pertaining to his crime. Careful and determined steps on the part of investigators and the victim led to Butcher admitting his crime in May 2016. Butcher was also implicated in further allegations of sexual assault on another child.

"For fifteen years the defendant denied sexually abusing the two young victims in this case, compounding a horrific betrayal," said the US attorney who prosecuted the case. "I commend the courage of the victims and the commitment of the Park Service investigator who took what was considered a cold case and developed the evidence necessary to convict."

Source: News release, Investigative Services Branch, Washington Office.

Death Valley National Park Park Staff Wash Away Latest Graffiti

Park employees had to roll out about 600 feet of hose to erase the latest graffiti at Death Valley.

Sometime in late October, unknown vandals scratched letters and symbols as large as 20 feet high and 40 feet across into the mud bottom of Ubehebe Crater at the northern end of the park.

After hearing complaints from visitors about the graffiti, the park dispatched a water tanker and a team of seven park employees to the crater on November 7th.

The cleanup crew ran a hose from the tanker to the bottom of the active volcano and soaked the scars in the dried mud, allowing the surface to return to its natural color and appearance.

"The marks would likely have been erased by the next significant rainfall, but that can be a long wait in Death Valley," the park said in a statement. Park workers could also have raked away the graffiti, but that could have opened the ground to invasion by nonnative weeds, officials said.

Death Valley has seen a rash of theft and vandalism in recent years, including visitors illegally driving on Racetrack Playa and the salt pan at Badwater Basin, "decorating" rocks as part of unauthorized art projects in the park, and stealing Indian artifacts and fossilized footprints left by prehistoric animals.

Ubehebe Crater is considered sacred to the Timbisha Shoshone tribe and important to scientists studying everything from volcanism to soil and rock samples collected by rovers on Mars.

Source: News story, Las Vegas Review-Journal.

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.

Washington Office

Public Comment Period For Proposed Fee Increases Extended

The National Park Service has extended the public comment periods for proposed peak-season entrance fees at 17 national parks and revised fees for road-based commercial tours and will accept comments until December 22nd.

The deadlines, originally scheduled for November 23rd, have been extended to accommodate interest in this issue from members of Congress and the public. Already, more than 65,000 comments have been received on the proposals.

Under the proposal, peak-season entrance fees would be established at 17 highly visited national parks. The peak season for each park would include its busiest contiguous five-month period of visitation. The peak season entrance fee for a seven-day pass to each park would be \$70 per private, non-commercial vehicle, \$50 per motorcycle, and \$30 per person on bike or foot. A park-specific annual pass for any of the 17 parks would be available for \$75.

The cost of the annual America the Beautiful - The National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass, which provides entrance to all federal lands, including all national parks for a one-year period, would remain \$80. Entrance fees are not charged to visitors under 16 years of age or holders of Senior, Military, Access, Volunteer, or Every Kid in a Park (EKIP) passes. The majority of national parks will remain free to enter; only 118 of 417 parks have an entrance fee.

The proposed new fee structure would be implemented at Arches, Bryce Canyon, Canyonlands, Denali, Glacier, Grand Canyon, Grand Teton, Olympic, Sequoia & Kings Canyon, Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Zion National Parks with peak season starting on May 1, 2018; in Acadia, Mount Rainier, Rocky Mountain, and Shenandoah National Parks with peak season starting on June 1, 2018; and in Joshua Tree National Park as soon as practicable in 2018.

Fees have long been an important source of revenue used to improve the visitor experience and recreation opportunities in national parks and on other federal lands. Estimates suggest that the peak season price structure could increase national park revenue by \$70 million per year. The funds would be used to improve roads, bridges, campgrounds, waterlines, bathrooms, and other amenities which enhance the visitor experience. Under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, 80% of entrance fees remain in the park where they are collected. The other 20% of the revenue is distributed to other national parks.

Access to the vast majority of National Park Service sites remains free; only 118 of 417 National Park Service units charge an entrance fee.

The public can comment period on the peak-season entrance fee proposal until December 22nd at this site on the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website. Written comments can be sent to 1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop: 2346 Washington, DC 20240.

The public comment period for proposed entry and permit fee adjustments for commercial tour operators has also been extended until December 22nd. The proposal would increase entry fees for commercial operators and standardize commercial use authorization (CUA) requirements for road-based commercial tours, including application and management fees. All CUA fees stay within the collecting park and would fund rehabilitation projects for buildings, facilities, parking lots, roads, and wayside exhibits that would enhance the visitor experience. The fees will also cover the administrative costs of receiving, reviewing, and processing CUA applications and required reports.

The proposal also includes a peak-season commercial entry fee structure for the 17 national parks referenced above. All proposed fee adjustments for commercial operators would go into effect following an implementation window.

Information and a forum for public comments regarding commercial permit requirements and fees is available until December 22nd <u>at this site</u> on the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website. Written comments can be sent to National Park Service, Recreation Fee Program, 1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop: 2346 Washington, DC 20240.

Source: News release, Office of Communications, Washington Office.

Senate

On November 15th, the House agreed to the conference report to accompany H.R. 2810, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2018 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, and to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year. See House action of November 14th on H.R. 2810, below, for provisions that are of interest to the National Park Service. The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law.

On November 20th, the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies released the chairman's recommendations for the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, FY 2018. It is unclear if the Senate Appropriations Committee will consider the bill and/or the full Senate will debate it prior to Congress acting on the bill via a conference with the House. In recent fiscal years, the Senate has just gone directly to conference with the House on the bill. The bill recommends \$2.94 billion in funding for the National Park Service, an increase of \$5.6 million from the FY 2017 level (the House bill had a reduction of \$64 million from the FY 2017 level, most of which was in land acquisition). However, the \$2.9 billion is \$388 million above the \$2.55 billion requested by the Trump Administration. The \$2.9 billion total amount is broken down as follows:

- \$2.4 billion for Operation of the Park System (the House bill had a similar amount and the administration requested \$2.2 billion);
- \$63 million for National Recreation and Preservation Programs (the House bill had \$59.6 million and the administration requested \$37 million);
- \$77.9 million for Historic Preservation Programs, (the House bill had \$80.9 million and the administration requested \$51.1 million), which includes:
 - o \$13 million for competitive grants to preserve Civil Rights sites and stories (the House bill had \$10.5 million), and
 - \$3 million for grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (the House bill had \$5 million).

- o The Senate bill has no funds earmarked for the Save America's Treasures grants while the House bill included \$5 million.
- o The Senate bill also has provided \$3,000,000 in new funding for preservation grants to revitalize historic properties of national, State and local significance in order to restore, protect and foster economic development of rural villages and downtown areas (the House bill had no recommendation for such a program).
- \$221.7 million for Construction (the House bill had \$219.8 million and the administration requested \$226.5 million);
- \$180 million for Land Acquisition (the House bill had \$120.575 million and the administration requested \$26.4 million), which includes:
 - \$124 million for State Grants under the Land and Water Conservation Fund (the House bill had \$79 million), with an earmark of \$10 million for the American Battlefield Protection grants (the House bill had a similar earmark), and
 - \$51.6 million is for federal land acquisition (the House bill had \$31.5 million).
- \$20 million for Centennial Challenge projects and programs with \$2 million earmarked for the National Park Foundation to leverage additional matching funds for projects (the House bill had \$15 million with a similar earmark for NPF and the administration requested a similar amount for the challenge).

The bill also includes the following general provisions:

- Sec. 118, to authorize administrative and visitor center facilities at Coltsville National Historical Park, CT to be located in appropriate buildings within the Colt Armory Complex instead of the East Armory building.
- Sec. 119, to designate the wilderness within the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve in AK as the Jay S. Hammond Wilderness.
- Sec. 120, 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;
- Sec. 122, to extend the authorization of appropriations for the Tennessee, Augusta Canal, and South Carolina National Heritage Areas for another two years until September 30, 2019.
- Sec. 123, among other provisions:
 - to authorize the Second Indianhead Division Association, Inc. to place additional commemorative elements or engravings on the existing Second Division Memorial in Washington, DC, to further honor the members of the Second Infantry Division, and
 - o to establish the Ste. Genevieve National Historical Park in the State of Missouri.
- Sec. 418, to provide a one-year extension of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission.
- Sec. 421, to extend the authority for the Chesapeake Bay Initiative for another two years through FY 2019.
- Sec. 427, to prohibit the use of funds to destroy any buildings or structures on Midway Island that have been recommended by the U.S. Navy for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Sec. 432, to provide authority for the Secretary of the Interior to enter into training agreements with local cooperators and to transfer excess equipment and supplies for wildfires.
- Sec. 438, to extends the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act for another year;

The bill also includes the following additional funding:

- \$1.8 million for the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission and \$15 million for construction of the memorial (the House bill had \$1.6 million for the commission and \$15 million for construction).
- \$1 million for the work of the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission, to help plan, execute and coordinate programs and activities in honor of the 100th anniversary of the passage and ratification the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (the House bill had similar funding and the administration did not request any funding).
- \$3.5 million for the work of the World War I Centennial Commission (the House bill had a similar amount and the administration had requested \$7 million).

House Of Representatives

On November 14th, the House agreed to the conference report to accompany H.R. 2810, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2018 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, and to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, by a yea-and-nay vote of 356 yeas to 70 nays. Of interest to the National Park Service are the following provisions:

- Sec. 317 to authorize the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior, to participate in a Sentinel Landscapes Partnership, which is intended to encourage federal agencies, private organizations, and private landowners to engage in voluntary land management and conservation activities that contribute to the sustainability of military installations, ranges, and airspaces.
- Sec. 352 to authorize the Second Indianhead Division Association, Inc. to place additional commemorative elements or engravings on the existing Second Division Memorial in Washington, DC, to further honor the members of the Second Infantry Division.
- Sec. 1095 to honor those who died during World War I, those who served in World War I, and to call upon all Americans to participate in activities to commemorate the centennial of World War I.
- Sec. 2863 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 conference report dropped several House-passed provisions that:

- would have established a national historic battleships preservation program;
- would have amended the boundary of Shiloh National Military Park to include Fallen Timbers, Russell House, and Davis Bridge Battlefields; and that would have established the Parker's Crossroads Battlefield in TN as an affiliated area of the National Park System;
- would have authorized the secretary of defense to transfer funds to the World War I Centennial Commission to assist in carrying out activities related to the Centennial; and
- would have prohibited the secretary of defense from using funds to designate or expand national heritage areas.

On November 15th, the House Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing, among other bills, on the following:

- H.R. 801, to amend the National Trails System Act to designate the Route 66 National Historic Trail;
- H.R. 2888, to establish the Ste. Genevieve National Historical Park in the State of Missouri; and
- H.R. 4266, to clarify the boundary of Acadia National Park.

Sue Masica, Acting Deputy Director for Operations, National Park Service was the witness for the department.

Park People, Friends and Allies

C&O Canal National Historical Park Education Coordinator Hollie Lynch Receives Tilden Award

Hollie Lynch, the park's education coordinator, is the recipient of the 2017 Freeman Tilden Award, the National Park Service's highest honor for excellence in interpretation and education. Lynch was recognized for her role in developing and implementing a series of innovative curriculum-based park programs for 200 schools in Maryland, West Virginia, and Washington, DC.

"Hollie turned the historic C&O Canal into an outdoor classroom for more than 10,000 elementary and high school students last year," said Acting National Park Service Director Michael T. Reynolds. "Her unique educational programs brought history and science to life, turning textbook subjects into multisensory experiences that will be long remembered."

In multiple locations along the 185-mile long C&O Canal, the park provides a classroom without walls for teachers and pre K-12 students in neighboring school districts. The programs support national and state learning standards, feature pre/post visit materials, and offer students hands-on and STEM-based activities.

Lynch designed the programs in partnership with local educators. She also recruited and trained volunteers for the Canal Classroom Corps which helped lead the presentations. Through their combined efforts, many teachers now view the park as a dynamic classroom that enhances curriculum and provides students with meaningful learning experiences.

Since 1981, the annual Freeman Tilden Award has recognized outstanding contributions to the practice of interpretation and education by a National Park Service employee. The award was created to stimulate and reward creative thinking that results in positive impacts upon the preservation of the parks and the visiting public. The award is named for Freeman Tilden, who has inspired generations of interpreters across the world and whose Interpreting Our Heritage continues to be a definitive text for the discipline.

Source: News release, Office of Communications, Washington Office.

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.

• **'America's Best Idea' Threatened** – This issue of *The Atlantic* has a feature story under this headline: "Is America's 'Best Idea' at Stake?" Here's an excerpt: "To some

degree, [this] administration's actions fall in line with the conservative stance on the protection of land—conservatives generally argue for increased deregulation and economic development of land, while liberals call for wilderness preservation. But never before has the country seen an administration, coupled with a Republican-controlled Congress, that is so clearly intent on rolling back existing land protections." Full story.

- Rangers Cited For Valor In Smokies Fire The Knoxville News-Sentinel has an article on the extraordinary and harrowing efforts that Great Smoky Mountain rangers made in saving lives during last year's terrible wildfires, which burned more than 17,000 acres, destroyed or damaged more than 2,500 structures, caused \$2 billion in damage and led to the deaths of 14 people. Less well known, says the newspaper, is the work of "30 to 40" rangers and other first responders: "At places like the Gatlinburg Bypass, Little River Road, Tremont and especially the Spur, the group battled through smoke, ash and the howling wind to prevent the historic disaster from claiming substantially more casualties." District Ranger Jared St. Clair and others tell the story of what happened. Full story.
- Attacks on Wilderness Continue The current issue of *The Nation* has a story carrying this headline: "The Plot to Loot America's Wilderness." It concerns "a little-known bureaucrat named James Cason [who] is reshaping the Department of the Interior." According to the article, Cason, who previously worked for Secretaries James Watt and Gale Norton, has become DOI's "hatchet man." Among other things, he's overseen the controversial reassignment of two dozen high-ranking DOI employees and the dismantling of rules governing energy development on public lands. Full story.
- **Deadline Reached On DOI Acting Assignments** *E&E News*, a news organization focusing on energy and the environment, reported on November 9th that "a little-known law soon could restrict top acting officials across the federal government and possibly leave the Trump administration's coming environmental and energy policy decisions legally vulnerable." Officials who've been serving in Senate-confirmed positions, like acting NPS director Mike Reynolds, are allowed to serve only 300 days under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act if their positions have been vacant since Inauguration Day. That clock ran out on November 16th. The article details the implications of actings continuing in their positions. <u>Full story</u>.
- Identifying The Congressional Anti-Parks Caucus The Center for American Progress posted a story on November 20th entitled "The Congressional Anti-Parks Caucus in Power." It details the efforts of a group of 19 members of Congress who are working to undercut parks and public lands and the laws that protect them. Although public opinion research conducted immediately following the election "found that 91 percent of voters across the political spectrum—including 87 percent of Trump voters—felt that it is important for the federal government to protect and maintain national parks, public lands, and natural places," these members are working with the administration to advance their own agenda: "With the cover and support of an aggressively anticonservation administration, these newly energized politicians are working hard to advance their unpopular agenda. From endorsing bills that open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil drilling to sponsoring legislation that blocks a president's authority to protect public lands, this faction of Congress is ignoring public opinion in order to push extreme and detrimental policies." Short abstracts are offered on each of the 19, along with details on their conservation voting records. Full story.
- **Recalling Rangers Roles In The Manson Family Story** As all of you undoubtedly know, the infamous Charles Manson died in prison earlier this month, prompting retrospectives in most media, including two articles in the New York Times an

obituary that recounts the story of the Manson family murders and an article on what became of family members. Neither of these give note to the role rangers had in arresting Manson, writes member Dick Martin, who adds the following: "Seems like a good time to remind NPS'ers that Death Valley National Park rangers [investigation into] a burned park grader led them to the Manson group's hangout at Barker Ranch in Death Valley. Manson and many of his followers were arrested by rangers, a CHP officer and a sheriff's deputy in 1969. Later, when they were in jail, investigators made the connection with the LA area murders." Dick adds that there's a very good, factual write-up on this case in *Desert Shadows: A True Story of the Charles Manson Family in Death Valley* by Bob Murphy, who was the park's superintendent at the time. Click on this link to see the Amazon entry on the book.

• **Route 66 Again Up For NHT Status** – *Hemmings Daily*, "the world's leading classic car news source," reports that the National Park Service is supporting National Historic Trail status for the highway. The Service made such a proposal in 1990, but Congress opted instead for a preservation program minus trail status. Along with the permanent designation and ongoing federal funding, National Historic Trail status would provide uniform signage along the 2,400-mile road, interpretive panels, and the opportunity to develop cooperative agreements with local organizations. The bill advocating NHT status is H.R. 801; the text can be read at this link. Full story.

Systemwide Park Operations Update

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

- Glen Canyon National Recreation Area/Grand Canyon National Park The two parks are is seeking public input on an expanded non-native aquatic species management plan and EA for the area below the Glen Canyon Dam. Public scoping is being held for a 30-day period from November 15th to December 14th. Control measures for expanded non-native aquatic species are needed due to the increase of green sunfish, brown trout and the potential for other harmful non-native aquatic species that threaten downstream native and listed threatened and endangered aquatic species. Comments can be filed via PEPC. Source: News release, Glen Canyon NRA.
- **Flight 93 National Memorial** Construction has begun on the Tower of Voices and will continue until winter weather restricts work. It will then resume in the spring and continue until completion. Completion and a dedication ceremony are planned for September 2018. This feature marks the final phase in the construction of the memorial. It will stand 93 feet tall and contain 40 wind chimes that will serve as an enduring memory of the voices of the passengers and crew. Source: News release, Flight 93 NM.
- Muir Woods National Monument A parking and shuttle reservation system will begin at the park on January 16th. All vehicles and shuttle passengers arriving at Muir Woods will be subject to the reservation system. Visitors arriving by commercial carrier or on foot or bicycle will not be required to use the reservation system or pay fees associated with it. Parking and shuttle reservations can be made up to 90 days in advance on a rolling basis. Details on the system can be found on the park's press release. Source: News release, Golden Gate NRA.
- **Lake Mead National Recreation Area** Boulder Beach Campground will undergo \$3.4 million in improvements over the next few months. Construction began on Monday and

will include the rehabilitation of 73 campsites in Loop D and the northwest section, along with the campground roads and the sanitation and potable water refill stations. Shade structures will also be added to the group sites. Source: News release, Lake Mead NRA.

- Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore The Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education will be closed for construction from December 1st to March 17th. The heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system will be replaced during the closure. The new HVAC system will have a "greener" footprint while making the building more comfortable and efficient to operate. Source: News release, Indiana Dunes NL.
- **George Washington Memorial Parkway** New engravings have been added to the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial, including two that recognize the Afghanistan and Iraq campaigns. The engravings are part of a rehabilitation project made possible by a \$5.37 million donation by businessman and philanthropist David M. Rubenstein. The project also included cleaning and waxing the memorial, brazing bronze seams, and re-gilding letters and inscriptions on the sculpture's base. Source: News release, George Washington MP.

Acknowledgements

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A Closing Observation

"The conflict between the demands of commerce and the preservation of [the national parks] involves constant vigilance. In my view, their preservation is of the first importance. It should be the settled policy of the country, regardless of any question of utility, that when in the wisdom of the Congress national parks or monuments are definitely set apart, they must be preserved in their integrity, forever free from any form of commercialization. If this principle is not recognized, and commercialization in any form is allowed to creep in, it will be only a question of time when our Wild West will be only a memory and the big game of our country will be extinct, and these places and objects, now so wonderful, will be seriously and permanently injured."

Secretary of the Interior John Barton Payne

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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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