



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

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Incidents

Ozark NSR

Heavy Rains Cause Major Flooding, Closures

Ozark National Scenic Riverways, located in southern Missouri, has been inundated by the heavy rains of the past few days and is officially closed. All river gages are at record high levels.

As of early this week, the Current River was 43.5 feet above normal at Powder Mill Bridge. The two-story Powder Mill Research Center was completely covered and more than 20 feet below the river's surface. All bridges at Round Springs, Eminence, and Alley Springs are or have been underwater. Buildings are washed up against the Highway 19 bridge at Eminence.

Specific park closures due to either high waters or flooding include all of the Jacks Fork River and the Current River from Tan Vat to Gooseneck and the Alley, Big Spring, Pulltite, Sinking Creek and Round Spring Campgrounds.

Source: Ozark NSR Facebook page. For more information go to [Facebook](#) and enter the park name in the search block at upper left.

Rocky Mountain NP

Two Lost Visitors Rescued From Bierstadt Lake

Late on the evening of Monday, April 24th, the park received a weak cell phone call for assistance from a man who was near Bierstadt Lake. He reported that he and his brother had become lost due to snow-packed trails and darkness.

Park SAR team members reached the pair at 1 a.m. It was snowing and the men were cold and wet and unprepared to spend the night without shelter. This incident could have ended differently if the two out of state visitors had not been fortunate to have cell phone coverage and a charged battery.

The incident served as an important reminder that it's not yet spring in the park's higher elevation. There's still a considerable amount of snow on trails and temperatures remain cold.

Source: Kyle Patterson, Public Affairs, Rocky Mountain NP. [More information](#).

Yosemite NP Woman Killed By Falling Tree In Half Dome Village

A woman was struck and killed by a falling tree in Half Dome Village in Yosemite Valley on the morning of Sunday, March 5th.

Destiny Rose Teixeira Borges, 20, from Ceres, California, was in the park working for a company contracted by the park concessioner.

The accident occurred during a period of heavy falling snow and high winds.

Half Dome Village, formerly Curry Village, is an area that has tent cabins and wooden cabins that are utilized by park visitors and park employees.

Source: Public Affairs Office, Yosemite NP. [More information.](#)

Grand Canyon NP Follow-up: Body Of Missing Hiker Found

On Friday, April 28th, rafters on a commercial river trip came upon the body of 14-year-old Jackson Standefer in the Colorado River and reported the discovery to the park. Standefer and Lou Ann Merrell, 62, were crossing Tapeats Creek on April 15th when they lost their footing, fell and were swept down the stream.

Rangers recovered Standefer's body, which was transported to the rim by helicopter and transferred to the Coconino County medical examiner.

The park conducted an extensive four-day search for the two hikers but searchers were unable to locate either of them. Merrell remains missing.

Source: Public Affairs Office, Grand Canyon NP. [More information.](#)

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center Fire Activity Continues In Southeast And New Mexico

The National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) remains at Preparedness Level 1, the lowest of five preparedness levels.

Fire activity continued in Florida, Georgia, Arizona and New Mexico last week. Ten new large fires were reported. The West Mims Fire in Georgia has now burned more than 80,000 acres and the Cowbell and Parliament Fires in Florida have each burned more than 20,000 acres.

As of April 28th, 18,396 fires had been reported nationwide, just a bit off the average year-to-date total of 18,370 fires for the period from 2006 to 2016. Those fires burned 1,937,911 acres, considerably more than the ten year year-to-date average of 800,561 acres.

Source: NIFC. [More information.](#)

Big Cypress NP Two Significant Fires Largely Contained

The IMT overseeing the Cowbell Fire filed its final report last Sunday morning. The fire had burned 21,840 acres as of that date and was 75% contained. A total of 160 firefighters and overhead were still assigned to the fire; another eleven firefighters were working the Mile Marker 87 Fire, which had burned 516 acres and was 80% contained. Click on [this link](#) for more information.

The last report on the Parliament Fire was filed several days ago. At that time, the fire had burned an estimated 26,471 acres and was 95% contained. Portions of the park, including Monument Lake and Burns Lake Campground and some trails, remained closed. Click on [this link](#) for more information.

Source: InciWeb Incident Information System.

Natural and Cultural Resources

Channel Islands NP

Highly Invasive Seaweed Discovered In Park

During their annual kelp forest monitoring surveys, NPS biologists found a highly invasive nonnative kelp (*Undaria pinnatifida*) at West Anacapa Island.

Since its initial discovery in June 2016, the invasive seaweed has spread along the entire north coast of the islet, prompting the need for public awareness and support to reduce its spread.

Undaria, the alga that is commonly found in miso soup and is known as wakame, is native to Asia. It first appeared on the west coast of North America in 2000 at Long Beach Harbor. It was first seen in Ventura Harbor in 2007.

Unlike *Sargassum horneri*, another recently introduced invasive alga, which spreads rapidly due to air bladders that allow it to float in currents, *Undaria* spreads slowly, unless assisted by transport on boat hulls or by other means.

Now that *Undaria* has been established, biologists are seriously concerned about its rate of spread increasing. The cold waters surrounding the islands are optimal for its growth. Due to its pattern of quick growth and its large size, *Undaria* may compete with native seaweeds for space and light, and, as a result, may impact the marine ecosystem.

Boaters are the first and best line of defense in limiting *Undaria*'s rate of spread, since eradication efforts are not considered a viable option. They can do so by regularly checking their vessel hulls, fishing gear and nets, moorings, lines, docks, and other structures, especially before leaving the harbor to visit the Channel Islands.

Source: Yvonne Menard, Public Affairs, Channel Islands NP. [More information](#).

Mount Rainier NP

Climate Change Impacts: Aggradation And Avulsion

During a storm in 2010, the Nisqually River swept away part of the embankment of Nisqually Road. The root cause of the damage was glacial retreat due to climate change.

Since 1913, glacial retreat has exposed an area of 14.5 square miles of park lands. As a result, when a storm crosses the park, it washes the boulders, rocks and soils previously capped by the glaciers into the rivers and creek beds, filling them up. This process, called "aggradation," results in more frequent "avulsions," or overtopping, from rivers and creeks. Avulsions can also act like a fire hose targeted on one area of the river bank, causing erosion.

These river banks hold up historic roads, including major passages for park visitors. The Nisqually Road, for example, is part of the Mount Rainier National Historic Landmark District, which includes the park's historic roads and infrastructure. Most of the park's two million visitors per year travel along the Nisqually Road to Paradise.

Because the historic roads are being increasingly damaged by flooding during storm events, the NPS is evaluating methods to repair the riverbanks supporting them. They aim to balance the look and feel of the historic landscape with engineering to keep the roads – and the people who drive on them – safe.

Source: Briefing Statement. Click on [this link](#) for more information.

Agency Management

Department of the Interior David Bernhardt Nominated As Deputy Secretary

Dave Bernhardt has been nominated to serve as the deputy secretary of the Department of the Interior. The deputy secretary serves as DOI's chief operating officer. Bernhardt's nomination is subject to confirmation by the United States Senate.

Bernhardt is an avid hunter and fisherman and recently served on the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries for the Commonwealth of Virginia. He has previously served as the United States Commissioner to the International Boundary Commission, U.S. and Canada.

From 2001 to 2009, he held several positions within the Department of the Interior, including serving as solicitor. Before that, he served Secretary Gale Norton as a deputy solicitor, deputy chief of staff, and counselor to the secretary, and as director of congressional and legislative affairs and counselor to the secretary. Currently, Bernhardt chairs the natural resource law practice at Brownstein, Hyatt Farber and Schreck, LLP.

A native of Rifle, Colorado, Bernhardt earned a B.A. from the University of Northern Colorado. He graduated with honors from the George Washington University National Law Center and is admitted to various state and federal court bars.

Source: Public Affairs Office, Department of the Interior. [More information](#).

Systemwide Executive Order Issued For Review Of National Monument Designations

On April 26th, the president signed what's called the Antiquities Act Executive Order. The order directs Secretary Zinke to review national monuments created by the Antiquities Act since January 1, 1996, that are greater than 100,000 acres in footprint, and requires that he report on suggested legislative or executive action, if applicable, within 120 days. Local governments and tribes are to be consulted in the review process.

The Antiquities Act of 1906 authorizes the president to declare federal lands of historic or scientific value to be national monuments by designating the "smallest area compatible with proper care and management of the objects to be protected."

Said Zinke: "The Department of the Interior is the steward of America's public lands. Part of being a good steward is being a good neighbor and being a good listener. In the Trump Administration, we listen and then we act. For years, the people of Utah and other rural communities have voiced concern and opposition to some monument designations. But too

often in recent history, exiting presidents make designations despite those concerns. And the acreage is increasing."

According to Zinke, the designations of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in 1996 and the Bears Ears National Monument in 2016 are considered "the bookends of modern Antiquities Act overreach." Each monument is more than 1.3 million acres.

The DOI press release, which is available at the link below, makes a number of other undocumented claims and allegations that will be of interest. Take a minute to look at it.

Source: Public Affairs, Department of the Interior. [More information.](#)

Park People, Friends and Allies

NPS Alumni

Passing Of Retired Historian Louis Torres

Retired National Park Service historian Louis Torres, 95, died peacefully at Julia Temple Healthcare Center in Englewood, Colorado, on Wednesday, April 26th.

Lou was born in New York City on June 29, 1921. The third and last child of Italian immigrants, he developed a great love for American history. He received his undergraduate degree in history at St. John's University and masters degrees in history at Columbia University and business administration at Hofstra College.

He started his career as a historian with the U.S. Air Force at Mitchell Field on Long Island after World War II, during which he served as a sergeant with the US Army Air Force in Bermuda. From there he went on to a job at Federal Hall National Memorial on Wall Street in Manhattan – a job that he said he "couldn't wait to get to each day."

In the early 1970s, Lou and his wife, Evelyn, moved to Littleton, Colorado. The move was prompted by a new position as a historian with the Denver Service Center's Eastern Team. At that time, the Service was gearing up for the celebration of the nation's bicentennial and there was a great need for historians to record the nation's history.

While in this position, Lou researched and wrote or co-authored many histories, including those about Cumberland Island NS, Eleanor Roosevelt NHS, Theodore Roosevelt NP, Friendship Hill NHS, Lassen Volcanic NP, Saratoga NHS, Gateway NRA's Fort Tilden, Pictured Rocks NL's Au Sable Lighthouse, and Fort Stanwix NM.

Lou leaves behind his wife, Evelyn, of Denver; daughter Patricia Cronenberger and husband, Richard of Littleton, Colorado; and son Louis Torres, Jr. and wife Barbara, of Scotts Mills, Oregon. Grandchildren are Anne Torres, Nathan Torres and Andrew Cronenberger and wife, Brianna.

His daughter Patricia worked for the National Park Service's National Register programs from 1978 to 1981 and son-in-law Richard Cronenberger retired after a long career as a historical architect in the Intermountain Regional Office.

A family service will be held in August at Fort Logan National Cemetery. Contributions in Lou's memory may be made to the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association-Alzheimer's Research, Chapter 1085, Alzheimer's Association, 225 N. Michigan Avenue, 17th Floor, Chicago, IL 60601 or to Integrated Family Community Services, 3370 S. Irving Street, Englewood, CO 80110.

For the full text of the obituary, click on the link below.

Source: Pat Cronenberger, Louis' daughter. [More information.](#)

Grand Canyon NP NPS Pilot Galen Howell Recognized For Mentoring Other Pilots

Park pilot Galen Howell has been awarded the NPS Excellence in Mentoring Aviation Award.

Howell is an experienced and trusted DOI pilot who provides basic and advanced flight operations training for both new and experienced DOI pilots.

Over the past eight years, Howell has mentored ten NPS pilots and pilot candidates from various parks throughout the United States. His skills and judgment have been called upon by the Service's national fleet aircraft and pilot specialist to determine if pilots have the skill, knowledge and ability to fly aircraft in the challenging environments found in the national parks.

His experience is based in real-world flying, having twice received in-flight action awards for safely and successfully dealing with in-flight emergencies.

Source: Justin Jager, Aviation Officer, Grand Canyon NP. [More information.](#)

Other News And Notes

Systemwide National Park Service In The News

A selection of additional recent news stories pertaining either directly or indirectly to the operation of the National Park Service:

- **Systemwide** – On May 2nd, the *New York Times* published an article entitled “23 Environmental Rules Rolled Back in Trump’s First 100 Days.” It provides a concise summary of actions taken by the president and Congress on an array of environmental issues, some which apply directly to the NPS (such as the executive order requiring a review of national monuments) and numerous others which indirectly apply to the parks. [Full story.](#)
- **National Monuments** – On April 28th, Northeast Public Radio posted a photo essay entitled “See The Sweeping American Landscapes Under Review By Trump.” It provides “a visual introduction to many of the national monuments now under review” – twenty to be exact. The photos are spectacular. [Full story.](#)

Systemwide Upcoming Events

Upcoming events and activities of potential interest to members of the Coalition:

- **Yellowstone NP** – A memorial ceremony for past Yellowstone superintendent Bob Barbee, who died last October, will be held at 2 p.m. on May 20th in the Old Faithful Rec Hall. For details, click on [this link](#). [Submitted by member Joan Anzelmo]
- **Appalachian NST** – The Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s Maine 2017 Conference will be held in Waterville, Maine, on the week of August 4th. There will be hikes,

excursions, bike rides and other activities that highlight the state of Maine. Participants will have the option of staying in dorms or camping on the grounds of Colby College and can participate in a variety of interesting guided or self guided trips. For more information, click on [this link](#) to the conference website. [Submitted by member Sarah Peskin]

- **Appalachian NST** – Along with the above, an Art and Land Conservation Symposium will be held on August 3rd and 4th at Colby College in Waterville, Maine. The symposium will explore the critical role of 19th and 20th century visual artists in the American land conservation movement, and considering how art can inform land conservationists, outdoor enthusiasts, art lovers, and citizen stewards in addressing contemporary pressures on the American landscape. Organized by the National Park Service and Appalachian Trail Conservancy. For more information, click on [this link](#).

Systemwide Weekly Park Status Update

Here's a listing of newly-announced extended area and facility closures and reopenings from across the Service:

- **Arches NP** – The Devils Garden area of Arches National Park, including access to all area hiking trails, will be closed from April 30 through June 3 to allow construction crews to complete needed road work. [More information](#).
- **Jefferson NEM** – Journey to the Top tram rides at the Gateway Arch have reopened to the public. The trams closed in late 2016 to replace the motor generator sets and improve the tram electrical system. Currently, the south tram is operating, while the north tram is undergoing the upgrade. Trams are expected to soon be at 100% capacity. [More information](#).
- **Grand Canyon NP** – The North Kaibab Trail is now open to foot traffic. It had been closed due to a storm-caused rockslide. [More information](#).
- **Yosemite NP** – The Big Oak Flat reopened to all vehicular traffic on Monday, May 1st. [More information](#).
- **Lake Roosevelt NRA** – The campground and boat launch at Porcupine Bay have been closed indefinitely due to a landslide that struck the access road on April 2nd. [More information](#).

Source: NPS.gov News Release website.

A Closing Observation

"The parks do not belong to one state or to one section. They have become democratized. The Yosemite, the Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon are national properties in which every citizen has a vested interest; they belong as much to the man of Massachusetts, of Michigan, of Florida, as they do to the people of California, of Wyoming, and of Arizona....Who will gainsay that the parks contain the highest potentialities of national pride, national contentment, and national health? A visit inspires love of country; begets contentment; engenders pride of possession; contains the antidote for national restlessness...He is a better citizen with a keener appreciation of the privilege of living here who has toured the national parks."

[Director Stephen Tyng Mather](#) (1917-1929)

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The *Weekly National Park System Report* is a publication of The Coalition To Protect America's National Parks. It is prepared by Coalition member Bill Halainen, former editor of the *NPS Morning Report*, and produced and disseminated by Coalition staffer Susannah Albert-Chandhok. Tips on and links to park-related stories are appreciated; please send to Bill at BHalainen@gmail.com.

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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