



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

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Volume 1

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Incidents

Santa Monica Mountains NRA Rangers Seek Vandal Who Painted Graffiti In Park

For the second year in a row, rangers have discovered the same unique graffiti near the highest point in the Santa Monica Mountains. It consists of one word – PROM? – painted in white on the red rock near Sandstone Peak. It's apparently a prom proposal.

Last year, a San Diego woman who posted Instagram photos of her paintings made on rock formations in various national parks, including Yosemite and Death Valley, was banned from 524 million acres of federal public land. Casey Nocket, then 23, pleaded guilty to seven misdemeanor counts and was sentenced to two years of probation and 200 hours of community work.

Sandstone Peak, at about 3,111 feet, is in Ventura County in the mountains northwest of Malibu. It can be reached from via a popular hiking trail that begins at Circle X Ranch near Calabasas.

Source: KTLA News. [More information, including images.](#)

Grand Canyon NP Woman Killed In Single Vehicle Accident

Marissa Timeche, 25, a park resident, was killed in an accident on Center Road in Grand Canyon Village around noon on Sunday, May 21st.

Timeche suffered fatal injuries when the vehicle in which she was riding collided with several trees. The vehicle's driver was transported to Flagstaff Medical Center with non-life threatening injuries.

An investigation into the crash is being conducted by the Arizona Department of Public Safety in coordination with the park and the Coconino County Medical Examiner.

Source: Press Release, Emily Davis, Grand Canyon NP. [More information.](#)

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center Fire Activity Continues In Southeast

The National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) is now at Preparedness Level 2, the second of five preparedness levels.

Six wildfires had burned 169,453 acres in four states as of yesterday. One new large fire was reported in Florida. Firefighters reached management goals on the Cougar Butte Fire in Oregon.

As of yesterday, 24,250 fires had been reported nationwide, just under the average year-to-date annual total of 25,942 fires for the period from 2006 to 2016. Those fires had burned 2,221,735 acres, almost twice the annual year-to-date average of 1,115,517 acres for the same period.

The following fire-related closures are in effect at NPS areas:

- **Zion NP** – As a result of dry grass contributing to high fire danger in the lower elevations of the park, restrictions were instituted on May 23rd prohibiting campfires in Zion Canyon and smoking in vegetated areas. [More information](#).
- **Southern Arizona Group** – Due to increased fire danger, Chiricahua NM, Coronado NM and Fort Bowie NHS implemented fire restrictions on May 24th. Campfires are permitted only in designated fire grates and smoking is restricted to areas free of flammable materials. [More information](#).
- **Tonto NM** – Restrictions similar to the above went into effect last week. [More information](#).

Source: NIFC Situation Report, plus individual park press releases.

Natural and Cultural Resources

Nothing this week.

Agency Management

Coalition to Protect America's National Parks CPANP Expresses Strong Opposition To President's Proposed NPS Budget

President's FY18 budget proposes a 13% cut to the National Park Service, which translates to nearly \$400 million.

“The budget proposed for the National Park Service is the worst budget since World War II,” said Coalition Chair Maureen Finnerty. “The National Park Service has experienced a multitude of cuts over the years, and we cannot afford any further reductions. We hope that the American public and gateway communities will resist these cuts by contacting their members of Congress and let them know that these cuts are not acceptable and that we cannot afford to reduce our investment in the economic engines for many communities.”

Among the impacts of such a draconian cut are the following:

- This reduction will likely cause program cutbacks and facility closures in 2018.

- Parks already struggling to hire permanent and seasonal staff because of historic anemic budget growth and costs rising faster than appropriations will be forced to make more staff cuts. The National Park Service currently has over 2,000 vacancies; the budget request contemplates reducing staffing by an additional 1,242 full time equivalents.
- While an apparent effort was made to reduce impacts at the park level by disproportionately reducing cooperative programs, the size of the proposed reduction is so large that they could not be held harmless. The requested reduction at the park level is -5.7%.
- About 15% of the current work in parks is done by volunteers, yet the budget request reduces this program support by 40% (\$6.7 million reduced by \$2.7 million)
- The only for an increase in appropriations is in construction at + 8.2% (\$209 million to \$226 million). By comparison, the construction appropriation in 2001 was \$352 million.
- In the face of an \$11 billion deferred maintenance backlog the budget request proposes to reduce two important funds (cyclic maintenance and repair rehabilitation), designed for maintenance projects at the park level, by \$40 million (-15.5%).

The Coalition is one of more than 100 environmental groups who've sent a joint letter to the House and Senate appropriations committees in "strong opposition" to these cutbacks. The full text of that letter can be found at [this link](#).

Source: CPANP Press Release. [Full text](#).

Congressional Actions

Through the efforts of member Don Hellmann, former assistant director, legislative and congressional affairs for the National Park Service, we will be posting periodic updates on legislative actions on The Hill. Today's update is somewhat lengthy because it goes back to the convening of 115th Congress on January 3rd:

New Public Laws

These bills have been signed into law by the president:

- P.L. 115-5, to disapprove the Stream Protection Rule issued by the Department of the Interior on December 26, 2016.
- P.L. 115-18, to authorize the placement in Area I of National Capital Region a memorial to commemorate and honor members of the Armed Forces who served on active duty in Operation Desert Storm or Operation Desert Shield.
- P.L. 115-31, to provide continuing appropriations for the National Park Services and other federal agencies for the remainder of fiscal year 2017.

Actions in the Senate

The Senate has taken the following actions since the beginning of the year:

- On February 17th, the Senate passed S. Res. 55, designating February 26, 2017 as "Denali National Park and Preserve Day" in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the establishment of Denali National Park and Preserve in Alaska.
- On March 1st, Rep. Ryan Zinke was confirmed as the secretary of the interior by a vote of 68-31.
- On March 15th, the Senate passed S. Res. 76, expressing support for the designation of March 21, 2017 as "National Rosie the Riveter Day."

- On March 30th, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee approved the following bills:
 - S. 55 and H.R. 46, to authorize a special resource study of Fort Ontario in New York as a potential unit of the national park system;
 - S. 99, to authorize a special resource study of the President James K. Polk Home in Columbia, Tennessee, as a potential unit of the national park system;
 - S. 167, to designate a National Memorial to Fallen Educators at the National Teachers Hall of Fame in Emporia, Kansas;
 - S. 189, to modify the boundary of the Fort Scott National Historic Site, Kansas;
 - S. 213, to designate the wilderness within the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve in Alaska as the Jay S. Hammond Wilderness Area;
 - S. 217, to amend the Denali National Park Improvement Act to clarify certain provisions relating to the natural gas pipeline authorized in Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska;
 - S. 287, to modify the maximum acreage available for inclusion in the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, Colorado;
 - S. 331, to remove the use restrictions on a parcel of land transferred to Rockingham County, Virginia, under the Federal Lands to Parks Program to allow its continued use as a day care center;
 - S. 363, to revise the authorized route of the North Country National Scenic Trail in northeastern Minnesota and to extend the trail into Vermont to connect with the Appalachian National Scenic Trail;
 - S. 392, to establish a commission to authorize activities and programs to recognize the contributions of African-Americans to the United States over the past 400 years;
 - S. 502, to transfer administrative jurisdiction from BLM to NPS for several properties within the boundary of Voyageurs National Park in Minnesota and to authorize the exchange of lands between NPS and Minnesota for a couple of state-owned properties within the park's boundaries;
 - S. 617, to designate segments of the Farmington River and Salmon Brook in Connecticut as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System;
 - S. 644, to authorize a special resource study of the Medgar Evers House in Jackson, Mississippi, as a potential unit of the national park system;
 - S. 713, to establish the Mountains to Sound Greenway National Heritage Area in Washington;
 - S. 729, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to acquire approximately 44 acres of land in Martinez, California, for inclusion in the John Muir National Historic Site;
 - S. 733, to protect and enhance opportunities for recreational hunting, fishing, and shooting – among other provisions, the bill requires each federal land management agency, including the NPS, to submit a list of areas where access is restricted for hunting, fishing, or recreational purposes, and options for providing access to the areas; exempts small businesses, crews of fewer than three individuals, or a person using only a camera and tripod from paying filming fees on federal lands; authorizes the transport of bows and crossbows not ready for immediate use in vehicles traveling across NPS lands; and authorizes the use of qualified volunteers in wildlife management on NPS lands;
 - H.R. 88, to expand the boundary of Shiloh National Military Park in Tennessee and Mississippi, and to establish the Parker's Crossroads Battlefield as an affiliated area of the national park system;
 - H.R. 267, to re-designate the Martin Luther King, Junior National Historic Site in Georgia as the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park and to expand the boundary to include the Prince Hall Masonic Temple, the headquarters of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference;

- H.R. 494, to expand the boundary of Ft. Frederica National Monument in Georgia;
 - H.R. 538, to re-designate Ocmulgee National Monument in Georgia as Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park and to revise its boundaries to include additional properties;
 - H.R. 558, to revise the boundary of Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park in Georgia to include the Wallis House and Hairston Hill;
 - H.R. 560, to provide access to certain vehicles servicing municipalities adjacent to Delaware Gap National Recreation Area in Pennsylvania via Route 209; and
 - H.R. 863, to authorize administrative and visitor center facilities at Coltsville National Historical Park, Connecticut, to be located in appropriate buildings within the Colt Armory Complex instead of the East Armory Building.
- On April 5th, the Senate passed S. Res. 117, designating the week of April 15 – April 23, 2017, as “National Park Week.”
 - On May 18th, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on the nomination of David Bernhardt of Virginia to be deputy secretary of the interior.

Actions in the House of Representatives

The House has taken the following actions since the beginning of the year:

- On April 27th, the House Natural Resources Committee approved the following bills:
 - H.R. 1073, 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, Virginia;
 - H.R. 1135, to reauthorize the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Historic Preservation Program;
 - H.R. 1500, to authorize the designation of the small property at 24th and Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., in Washington, D.C. as the Robert Emmet Park and to the placement in the park of information about his statue, his contributions to Irish Independence, and his respect for the United States and the American Revolution, and
 - H.R. 1769, to authorize a special resource study of the Medgar Evers House in Jackson, Mississippi, as a potential unit of the national park system.
- On May 1st, the House passed H.R. 1242, to establish a commission to authorize activities and programs to recognize the contributions of African-Americans to the United States over the past 400 years.
- On May 17th, the House passed H.R. 653, to extend protections against discrimination in a federal workplace based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability to interns (individuals performing uncompensated voluntary service to earn credit awarded by an educational institution or to learn a trade or occupation) and to applicants for internships.

Upcoming Hearings

On June 7th, the Senate Subcommittee on National Parks of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee will hold an oversight hearing entitled, “Moving into a Second Century of Service: Working to Improve the National Park Service Workplace Environment.” Maria Burks, Executive Council of the Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks, has been asked to testify at the hearing.

Park People, Friends and Allies

Nothing this week.

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:

- **Eastern Areas** – The National Hurricane Center has issued its 2017 hurricane season forecast, which is of consequence to both NPS areas in the Caribbean and along the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Coasts and to areas immediately inland likely to receive sustained heavy rainfalls. For the upcoming Atlantic hurricane season, which runs from June 1st through November 30th, forecasters predict a 45 percent chance of an above-normal season, a 35 percent chance of a near-normal season, and only a 20 percent chance of a below-normal season. [Click here](#) for the forecast.
- **Yellowstone NP** – On May 24th, *Planet Jackson Hole* posted an article by Todd Wilkinson entitled “Saying Goodbye To Yellowstone’s Bob Barbee, A Giant Of The Green And Grey.” It’s a good tribute, with some memorable Barbee quotes in it. [Click here](#) for the full story.
- **Glacier NP** – As we all know, Glacier National Park is rapidly losing its glaciers. On May 24th, the *New York Times* ran an article on a recent study which shows just how much they’ve diminished: “Using aerial and satellite imagery, researchers traced the footprints of 39 named glaciers in the park and surrounding national forest,” writes Nadja Popovich. “They found that 10 had lost more than half their area over 50 years.” The others had lost from 10% to 49%. The article includes small maps of each of the 39 glaciers, showing how much each has lost in acres and as a percentage. [Click here](#) for the article.
- **NPS Retirees** – The *Federal Times*’ May 23rd edition has an article entitled “Trump Budget To Carve \$4B From Federal Employee Retirement.” “The Office of Management and Budget’s summary tables for the fiscal 2018 plan outline more than \$4 billion in cuts to federal employee retirement benefits this year,” writes reporter Carten Cordell. “As expected the White House budget calls for eliminating cost-of-living adjustments for all employees in the Federal Employee Retirement System and cutting the COLA rate by 0.5 percent for those in the Civil Service Retirement System, saving an estimated \$524 million in fiscal 2018. Another \$1.7 billion will come from increasing federal employee contributions 1 percent a year over the next six years to match the government contribution rate, while another \$1.875 billion will come from other moves, including basing retirement benefits on the average of the highest five years of salary.” [Click here](#) for the full text.
- **National Monuments** – *BuzzFeed News* posted a story on May 26th on the potential upcoming fight over the size and status of national monuments. The reporter interviews a number of people about the probability of “an unprecedented legal challenge” to any efforts to shrink or do away with them. [Click here](#) for the full story.

Systemwide

Upcoming Events

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

- **June 3** – National Trails Day. [More](#).

- **June 12** – Due date for comments in the White House review of federal agencies, which solicits public “ideas and suggestions on how the government can be better organized to work for the American people.” [More](#).
- **July 10** – Due date for comments in DOI review of all national monuments but Bears Ears NM. [More](#).
- **August 4** – The Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s Maine 2017 Conference will be held in Waterville, Maine, on the week of August 4th. [More](#).
- **August 3-4** – Along with the above, an Art and Land Conservation Symposium will be held on August 3rd and 4th at Colby College in Waterville, Maine.
- **October 18-22** – Ranger Rendezvous 40, Association of National Park Rangers, YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park, Colorado. [More](#).

A Closing Observation

"I do not want to see our national parks robbed of any of their beauty on the ground that it must be done in order to secure money sufficient to pay the expenses of maintaining them. I do not want to see any of the natural resources taken from them that would in any way mar their beauty. I think it would be the best money that Congress could spend to place the parks in a condition that they can be enjoyed by the people of the United States."

[Senator Reed Smoot](#) (R-Utah), addressing the 1916 Conference on National Parks

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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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