



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

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Incidents

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park Details Of Park's Limited Reopening Announced

The park continues to work toward its goal of reopening some closed areas by September 22nd, Public Lands Day.

A National Park Service geomorphology team recently began evaluating the stability of areas damaged or potentially weakened by earthquakes. Results will determine where it will be safe for visitors to go. On August 28th, non-potable water was restored to nine park buildings, including the visitor center. Water has not yet been restored to the Volcano House and water from the entire park water system remains unsafe to drink. As of August 29th, 32 park buildings had been inspected for earthquake damage. The geomorphology team also completed an initial inspection of Thurston Lava Tube, but further assessments are needed to determine if the lava tube is safe to reopen.

On August 31st, the park announced that it is preparing to reopen these specific locations on September 22nd:

- Kilauea Visitor Center
- Hawai'i Pacific Parks Association store at Kilauea Visitor Center
- Crater Rim Trail between Volcano House and Kilauea Military Camp
- Sulphur Banks Trail
- Crater Rim Drive to Steam Vents
- Kilauea Iki Overlook and parking lot
- Devastation Trail and Pu'u Pua'i
- Crater Rim Drive to Keanakāko'i Crater, for pedestrians and bicyclists only
- Mauna Loa Road to Kīpukapuāulu; open to pedestrians and bicyclists past Kīpukapuāulu
- Sections of the escape road from Highway 11
- Chain of Craters Road

The Volcano Art Center Gallery and Kilauea Military Camp also plan to open that day, and limited services may be available at Volcano House. The entrance station will open by 10 a.m. on September 22nd and the park will go back to being open 24 hours a day.

On September 10th, a team of engineers from the Federal Highway Administration will begin assessments of park roads. Due to extensive earthquake damage, no vehicles over 15,000 pounds will be allowed to enter the park when it reopens.

Source: [Big Island Video News](#).

National Capital Region DC-Area Parks Hammered By Spring And Summer Storms

Strong storms that have struck the Washington area since this past spring have cumulatively wreaked millions of dollars in damage on NCR parks. The DC region received more than 20 inches of rain over the summer alone.

According to the *Washington Post*, storms have caused “floods, downed trees, washed-out trails and waterways so bloated that repairs have been nearly impossible. In many cases, the damage has outpaced the agency’s ability to fund fixes and hampered basic maintenance tasks such as cutting grass and emptying toilets.”

The *Post* article goes on to itemize damage inflicted on Prince William FP, Harpers Ferry NHP, and C&O Canal NHP. It concludes with this quote from Kevin Brandt, superintendent of C&O Canal: “This is the first time in a long time we’ve seen the storms going on and on all summer like they have this year. We’re thinking we’re going to have to look at entirely new strategies for how to deal with that when it happens again.”

Source: [Washington Post](#).

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area Man Drowns, Three Others Nearly Drown In Wahweap Bay

On August 27th, park dispatch received a 911 call reporting a vessel coming into the Wahweap Marina with a male drowning victim on board.

Rangers and a Coconino County Sheriff’s Office deputy responded and found that the scope of the incident was larger than they had originally thought. They discovered a man and woman with propeller cuts to their legs, three near-drowning victims, and one distraught person. The Page Fire Department and Classic Air Medical were called to help with the situation.

Investigation revealed that about 30 young-adult foreign nationals rented three pontoon boats from Wahweap, then headed out on Wahweap Bay near the Castle Rock Cut. Many of the party jumped into the water to swim, none of them wearing life jackets. When the winds picked up, several of the swimmers began having difficulty. Boat operators in the group were able to pick many of the swimmers out of the water, some of whom were near total exhaustion; others were able to make it to shore.

Aleksandr Kurganov, 20, of Russia, was pronounced dead at the scene. The woman with propeller cut was airlifted to Dixie Regional Hospital in St. George. The man with the propeller cut and the distraught victim were transported to a hospital in Page. Three near-drowning victims refused medical transport.

Source: [News4Utah](#).

Zion National Park Rangers Rescue Nine Visitors Trapped By Rockslide

The Hidden Canyon Trail at Zion National Park was closed for at least a week after a rockslide trapped six visitors on Tuesday, August 28th.

The nine visitors were rescued with the help of Zion's search and rescue crew and a helicopter and crew from the Grand Canyon. All nine visitors were flown out of the canyon. No injuries were reported.

The area is being monitored for more rockslides while the trail is closed. At the time of the report (last Tuesday), Weeping Rock, East Rim Trail, Observation Point Trail, Cable Mountain Trail and Deer Trap were still open.

Source: [KSNV News](#).

Apostle Islands National Lakeshore Man And Three Children Drown In Boating Accident

Erik Fryman and his three children, ages three, six and nine, died when their kayak capsized late on August 30th off Apostle Islands. The man's wife, Cari Mews, mother of the three children, survived.

The family of five was touring the islands when their watercraft overturned about a mile west of Michigan Island before 8:30 p.m. Fryman apparently attempted to swim to shore with the three children, while Mews remained at the scene of the capsizing with the vessel and their supplies, sending the text messages to her sister.

Fryman and two of the children were found dead in the water after midnight; the body of the third child was recovered near the island on Friday morning. Mews, who had become separated from the rest of the group, was located in the water off Michigan Island just after 10 p.m. Thursday. She was pulled to safety by the crew of the U.S. Geological Survey research vessel *Kiyi*.

High winds and waves were evidently a contributing factor. All five members were wearing life jackets when the kayak capsized. The family had made frequent visits to the Apostle Islands and had experience kayaking. Investigators determined that the family had been vacationing on Madeline Island and left earlier in the day with the intention of touring the lakeshore by kayak.

The U.S. Coast Guard, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Bayfield Fire and Rescue and National Park Service all participated in the search effort.

The head of the Coast Guard rescue effort made an all too familiar observation about the impact on rescuers: "This crew is really hurting. They're really devastated. Crews train for this, to get the call and go out. They have expectations of helping someone and bringing them to safety. So they're pretty discouraged. In this case, there's four members of the same family, and when some of the crew members have children in the same age group, it hits them hard. There are a lot of heavy hearts at the station."

Source: [Duluth News Tribune](#).

Yosemite National Park Body Of Missing Hiker Found

The body of a missing hiker was found on the next-to-last weekend of August.

On August 11th, Scott Tenczar, 48, was reported missing. An experienced backpacker, he had last been seen on July 25th at the Bridgeport Ranger Station, ten miles east of Yosemite on Highway 395.

Tenczar, a former Army Ranger, was planning a Yosemite backpacking loop of about 40 miles out of the Twin Lakes area. Points on his itinerary included Robinson Creek, Crown Lake, Matterhorn Canyon, Smedberg Lake, Seavey Pass and Peeler Lake.

Tenczar's parents became worried when he did not contact them after his trip was supposed to end, around August 8th or 9th and advised the park.

Source: San Jose [Mercury News](#).

Rocky Mountain National Park Park's SAR Team Finds Body Of Missing Man

On August 31st, a body was found by park SAR team members west of Keplinger's Couloir at 12,600 feet in extremely steep, rugged terrain. Identification had not been confirmed at the time of the report, but it's believed that the body is that of Jens "Jay" Yambert, 60, of Urbana, Illinois.

On Tuesday, August 28th, rangers were notified by a family member that Yambert was overdue from a hike. Evidence indicated that he started from the Longs Peak Trailhead at 2 p.m. on Sunday, August 26th. His rental car was found at the trailhead Tuesday night after park staff were notified by his family that he was overdue. Neither his destination nor route were known.

After learning about the search for Yambert, park staff heard from visitors who saw him on the morning of Monday, August 27th, along the Keyhole Route. They reported that the weather was poor with ice, sleet, rain, and strong winds.

Extensive ground and aerial search efforts began on Wednesday morning. Assisting in the search were Rocky Mountain Rescue, Larimer County Search and Rescue (including one dog team), and Northern Colorado Helitack.

Source: [Rocky Mountain National Park](#).

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center NIFC Drops To Preparedness Level 4; Many Big Fires Still Burn

Synopsis

NIFC has dropped the national preparedness level to PL 4.

As of yesterday, a total of 100 large wildfires remained active across the nation. Together, they have burned over 1.9 million acres. Five new large fires were reported – two each in Colorado and Washington and one in Texas. Two large fires were contained, one in Texas and the other in Washington.

National Park Service Fires

These significant fires are currently burning in national parks:

- *Rocky Mountain NP* – The Forest Canyon and Mirror Fires both started on Thursday, August 30th, when a thunderstorm moved through the park. Fire managers made the decision to suppress both fires due to heavy dry fuel loads and the potential for extreme fire growth. At the time the fires started, NIFC was also at National Planning Level 5, which meant that fire resources were stretched thin and might not be available should the fires grow. The Forest Canyon Fire has burned six acres and is 80 percent contained. It's burning below Trail Ridge Road between Rock Cut and Forest Canyon Overlook. This area of Forest Canyon has not burned in the last 800 years. Over the weekend, fire crews were assisted by a Type 1 Chinook helicopter which dropped water on the lower section of the fire bordering Forest Canyon. The Mirror Fire is located in the remote northern section of the park and is considered controlled. This fire burned approximately one tenth of an acre. Ground crews assisted by helicopter water drops were successful in their efforts and were pulled from the fire on Sunday afternoon. Fire crews are actively monitoring the fire through aerial surveillance and weather monitoring. Trail and backcountry campsite closures have been lifted from the Mirror Lake area and Upper Beaver Meadows Road has reopened. Trail Ridge Road remains open, though smoke might be visible due to the Forest Canyon Fire. For more information, [click on this link](#).
- *Glacier NP* – The Howe Ridge Fire has burned 12,496 acres and is 12% contained. A Type 1 IMT (Goicoechea) is managing the fire. Update as of Monday, September 3rd: The fire burned

actively through fuels on its southwest perimeter. It continued to burn in heavy downfall and regrowth in the burn scar from the 2003 Robert Fire near the Inside North Fork Road. Smoke and isolated single tree torching was visible from the Apgar area and from the McGee Meadow overlook along the Camas Road. The Inside North Fork road has been cleared and prepared as a fire line. Firefighters are ready to respond as necessary as the fire approaches the Inside road. There are large numbers of standing dead trees in the area, which make it hazardous for firefighters to directly engage the fire. Minimal behavior was expected in all other areas of the fire. Sawyer crews and heavy equipment were working to remove hazard trees and debris on and along North Lake McDonald Road to clear the road and allow firefighters safe access to the area. Crews are continuing to monitor areas displaying fire activity along the southeast aspect of Mt. Vaught. The majority of Glacier National Park is open. Open areas include Apgar, Two Medicine, St. Mary, Many Glacier and the North Fork. The Howe Ridge fire is burning in less than 1% of Glacier's 1 million acres. The temporary closure area for public safety and fire suppression access is approximately 93,500 acres, or less than 10% of the park. Evacuation orders remain in place for the North McDonald Road (private residences and the Lake McDonald Ranger Station), Lake McDonald Lodge area (all businesses, employees, and private residences), private residences along the Going-to-the-Sun Road, and Sprague Creek, Avalanche, and Fish Creek Campgrounds. Going-to-the-Sun Road remains open for 18 miles between St. Mary and Logan Pass; it is closed for 30 miles between the foot of Lake McDonald (near Apgar) and Logan Pass. North McDonald and Fish Creek Roads are closed. The Inside North Fork Road is closed from Fish Creek to Logging Creek. Trail closures are associated with this fire; full trail closures are reflected on the park's website at: www.nps.gov/glac. More information on the fire can be found at [this InciNet webpage](#).

- *Whiskeytown NRA* – Cal Fire continues to manage the Carr Fire, which is now 100% contained. The fire burned a total of 299,651 acres. Mop-up continues. The park reopened the Whiskey Creek and East Beach areas on September 1st. All other areas of the park, including trails, campgrounds, and facilities, remain closed due to hazardous conditions. More information can be found at [this InciNet webpage](#) and at the [park's webpage](#).

Active Incident Resource Commitments

Category	August 21st	August 28th	September 4th
Area Command Teams	0	0	0
NIMO Teams	2	2	1
Type 1 Teams	15	14	7
Type 2 Teams	21	21	12
Crews	528	447	344
Engines	1,461	1,002	805
Helicopters	172	164	162
Total FF/Overhead	26,010	20,703	15,793

Fires/Acreage

Category	2018 Total	2008-2017 Ave	2018 Variance
Year-to-Date Fires	45,885	47,955	- 2,100
Year-to-Date Acres	6,961,533	5,550,875	+ 1,410,658

Sources: [National Interagency Fire Center](#).

[News From Around Washington](#)

Reports on official actions and activities from Capitol Hill, the White House, the Department of the Interior, the National Park Service and other related agencies and NGO's.

Department of the Interior
David Vela Nominated As Next NPS Director

David Vela, currently superintendent of Grand Teton National Park, has been selected to be the nineteenth director of the National Park Service.

Vela has served as the superintendent of Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway since 2014. Prior to his current post, Vela served as associate director for workforce, relevancy and inclusion in WASO.

Vela also served for over four years as regional director for Southeast Region and as superintendent of Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site, Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park, and George Washington Memorial Parkway.

Source: [Department of the Interior press release](#).

Department of the Interior
DOI Issues Memo On 'Unified Regional Boundaries' Under New Reorganization

On August 29th, Secretary Zinke issued a memorandum to all DOI employees entitled "Reorganization Update: Establishment of Unified Regional Boundaries for the Department of the Interior." The full text follows:

The Department of the Interior has a proud history spanning 169 years of exemplary service to the American people. To prepare the Department for the next 100 years, I am pleased to announce the next steps we have taken to modernize the way we do business in order to continue to responsibly manage America's natural resources.

The Department has established 12 Unified Regions for all of Interior's Bureaus except for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians, and the Bureau of Indian Education. The Unified Regions, [displayed on the map here](#), provide the framework for the Department's next 100 years of service. These Unified Regions, rooted in the best science focused on watersheds and ecosystems, will simplify how the Department is organized. Presently, we have 49 different regions, so the move to the 12 Unified Regions adds clarity and simplicity to the Department's activities.

As we proceed forward with the next steps of our reorganization effort, our new Unified Regions will allow important decisions to be made nearer to where our stakeholders and intergovernmental partners live and work, and will make joint problem-solving and improved coordination between our Bureaus and other Federal, State, and local agencies easier. Our new organization also will reduce bureaucratic redundancy, will improve communication between our experts in the field and leaders in Washington, D.C., and will allow us to share our knowledge and resources more effectively among the Department's field staff and local stakeholders.

In the next few months, many of our senior executives will be working in each Unified Region and focusing on and designing core elements of its operations, depending on the actual circumstances on the ground. The implementation of these new Unified Regions will be a thoughtful, Department-wide effort driven by leadership and employees in the field. This ground-up approach will tap into the expertise and experience of you—our most dedicated career civil servants. With these changes, we fully expect to be able to deliver our services more efficiently and effectively.

I want to reassure you that there will not be any office or personnel relocations during the initial implementation of our new Unified Regions, and your reporting structure is unchanged during the initial implementation phase.

Thank you for your continued service. Your hard work and dedication enables us to deliver on our mission and to serve the American people. As we proceed with our modernization, your input will be vital to fostering the success within each new Unified Region.

If you have ideas or questions, please don't hesitate to share them by emailing reorg@doi.gov or visiting www.doi.gov/employees/reorg.

To reiterate, here's the link contained in the memorandum for the new [Unified Regional Boundaries](#).

Capitol Hill Weekly Legislative Roundup

No update this week. The legislative roundup will resume in the September 12th edition.

Source: Don Hellmann, former assistant director, legislative and congressional affairs for the National Park Service.

Park People, Friends and Allies

NPS Alumni Passing Of Carolyn Richard

Carolyn Richard, a 34 year veteran of the National Park Service, passed away on August 1st at her home in Phoenix, Arizona.

Carolyn had a long and honorable career serving at many national parks across the country as an interpreter and curator. At Grand Canyon in 1988, as curator overseeing the planning and building of a new state of the art curatorial facility for the park's collection, she met Ellis Richard, also a career NPS employee at Grand Canyon. They married in 1989. Their daughter, Siena Richard, was born in 1993.

In 2000, Carolyn began working for the NPS Washington Office as a training manager for the new Facility Management Software System.

In 2005, she was hired as the chief of interpretation at Carlsbad Caverns. From 2005 to 2011, she worked at Grand Tetons NP as chief of interpretation. In 2011, she made her final move, back to Washington, DC, as the chief of visitor services and education at the National Mall and Memorial Parks, a position she remembered as one of the most challenging and satisfying jobs in her career.

Carolyn retired in September 2014.

[Click on this link for her full obituary.](#)

Source: Member Rob Arnberger.

News Reports and Releases

A brief summary of recent news stories, web postings and agency press releases pertaining to the federal government, the administration, DOI, the National Park Service, public lands and the climate and environment.

Government and Administration

DOI Ordered Director Reynolds To Rescind NPS Science Policy Statement – “As deputy director of the National Park Service, Michael Reynolds played a key role in developing a sweeping new vision for managing national parks,” reports *High Country News*. “The new policy [DO-100], enacted in the final weeks of the Obama administration, elevated the role that science played in decision-making and emphasized that parks should take precautionary steps to protect natural and historic treasures...” He later rescinded it, but newly released documents and emails show that he did so only because DOI specifically ordered him to rescind it. The emails were among 170 pages of documents released in response to a Freedom of Information Act request from the Union of Concerned Scientists, an activist group. Source: [High Country News](#).

Government Defunds Grand Canyon Programs – KNAU, the Northern Arizona University public radio station, reports that “longstanding programs to protect the river’s health are about to be defunded by the federal government” and that “river managers say the result could be disastrous for the crown jewel of the national parks.” The Office of Management and Budget ordered \$23 million intended for the three monitoring programs to be redirected to the U.S. Treasury, starting October 1st. The Department of the Interior was not consulted on the decision. Representatives of the seven Colorado River Basin states are fighting to restore the funds. Source: [KNAU News](#).

National Park System

Stories and articles pertaining to the parks, regions, technical and training centers, and WASO.

Searchable Database Developed On NPS Deferred Maintenance Needs – The Pew Charitable Trusts have developed a tool for determining the maintenance backlogs for each park in the system, sorted by either park or state. “Use this tool, based on NPS data,” says Pew, “to learn more about deferred maintenance at NPS sites across the country, in your state, and at your favorite park, including what types of infrastructure need repairs at each park site (such as buildings, roads, and trails); whether these repairs affect the park’s transportation or historic assets; the estimated cost of the repairs; [and] how NPS prioritizes deferred maintenance work.” [Editor’s note: I tried the search engine and found that it’s very slow, evidently due to the size of the database. You may have more luck.] Source: [Pew Charitable Trusts](#).

Funding Increased For ‘Find Your Park’ Initiative – “Outdoor retailer L.L. Bean is donating \$3 million to a campaign to promote America’s national parks,” reports Maine’s *Portland Press Herald*. “The Freeport company is making the donation to the National Park Foundation, the official nonprofit partner of the National Park Service. The money will be used to support the foundation’s Find Your Park/Encuentra Tu Parque movement, according to a news release from L.L. Bean. The Find Your Park campaign aims to inspire people of all backgrounds and abilities, including outdoor enthusiasts and novices, to discover and share their connections to America’s national parks.” Source: [Portland Press Herald](#).

Around The Parks – Brief reports on parks, culled either from park press releases or from newspapers:

- *Alaska Region* – “The National Park Service’s proposal to ramp up hunting of wolves and bears in Alaska’s wildlife preserves is sparking tens of thousands of public comments asking the administration to scrap the proposal,” reports the *Washington Examiner* in its September 3rd edition. As of that date, more than 100,000 comments had been received by the NPS. Source: [Washington Examiner](#).
- *Yellowstone NP* – It seems that every year – at times, every few months – some publication posts a story about the mega-volcano underlying the park and the possibility of a catastrophic eruption. On August 21st, *USA Today* ran an article about the much more likely threat of a magnitude seven earthquake occurring in the park or region. Here’s a quote from Michael Poland, scientist-in-charge at the Yellowstone Volcano Observatory, a consortium of eight

organizations led by the U.S. Geological Survey: “The biggest concern we have for Yellowstone is not with the volcano, it’s with earthquakes,” he said. “This is an underappreciated hazard in the Yellowstone area. There can and there will be in the future magnitude-7 earthquakes.” But Jamie Farrell, a University of Utah geology professor, puts that prospect, too, in perspective: “We like to talk about these big, grandiose things happening like big earthquakes or large volcanic eruptions, but those are highly unlikely events,” he said. “You’re in much more danger driving to Yellowstone than you would be by any of these things happening while you’re there.” Source: [USA Today](#).

- *Acadia NP* – In mid-August, the park released a 28-page report summarizing the public comments and suggestions on its draft transportation plan, which aims to reduce traffic and parking congestion. According to the report, “a total of 489 unique correspondences were received via email, mail, in person at meetings and information sessions and on (the web). An additional 5,750 form letters were submitted to the park.” An article in the *Mount Desert Islander* reports on the array of comments. The park hopes to release the finished plan this winter. Source: [Mount Desert Islander](#).
- *Everglades NP* – The August 24th edition of the *Miami Herald* had an article about the possibility of a “super snake” evolving in the glades: “What started out as a straightforward genetic study of Florida’s invasive python population has turned up a surprising plot twist: a small number of crossbred Burmese and Indian pythons with the potential to become a kind of Everglades super snake.” USGS researchers studied tail tissue from 400 snakes captured in South Florida. Most proved to be closely related to Burmese pythons, but 13 of them “had genetic markers from Indian pythons, a different species that unlike the swamp-loving Burmese snake prefers high, dry ground. The number is clearly small, but it raises the risk that over time some Everglades snakes could become better suited to a more varied landscape. Scientists call it hybrid vigor.” Source: [Miami Herald](#).
- *Lake Clark NP&P* – Katmai NP&P is no longer the only NPS site in Alaska drawing large numbers of visitors to see its grizzly bears. Planes from Homer, Kenai and Anchorage are ferrying thousands of visitors to Lake Clark’s Cook Inlet coastline for the same purpose. “The surge in traffic...is also prompting trespassing, liability and wildlife concerns for the Seldovia Native Association, which owns part of the bay’s coastline,” reports the *Anchorage Daily News*. “A National Park Service count showed that roughly 6,500 people described bear viewing as the reason for their visit last year,” whereas “just 1,000 called bears a priority in 2007...The park service this year embarked on a two-year visitor survey based on the increase.” Source: [Anchorage Daily News](#).
- *Cumberland Island NS* – A quarter honoring the park is the latest in the US Mint’s America the Beautiful series. It was released earlier this month. This design depicts a snowy egret posing on a branch on the edge of a salt marsh, ready for flight. Design candidates were developed in consultation with representatives of Cumberland Island National Seashore. Source: [US Mint](#).
- *Saguaro NP* – Salud America!, “a national Latino-focused organization,” has a story about the park on its webpage entitled “How One National Park is Attracting Latino Visitors.” It’s about a three-pronged strategy developed by Cam Juarez, the park’s community engagement coordinator, to get more Latinos to visit the park – diversify the park workforce; create culturally and linguistically relevant events, information, and outreach; and engage schools and universities. The article details how and why this model has become successful in increasing Latino visitation. Source: [Salud America!](#).
- *Yellowstone NP* – The Conversation, a webpage “devoted to improving the quality of public discourse,” has a story marking the 30th anniversary of the Yellowstone fires that focuses on how the park’s forests have rebounded from the fire and why such a recovery may be much harder in the future due to climate change. Because of increasing temperatures, for example, fires are burning again in young forests growing in areas that the ’88 fires burned three decades ago. It closes with this observation: “National parks anchor many of the country’s last

intact landscapes, and are among our best living laboratories for understanding environmental change. Research on the 1988 fires now provides a reference for assessing effects of more recent fires. Yellowstone will still maintain its beauty, native species and power to inspire us. However, only time will tell whether Yellowstone's forests can maintain their ability to recover from fire in the decades ahead." Elsewhere, a long article in the *Jackson Hole News & Guide* also focuses on the '88 fires, the lessons learned from them, and the impact of climate change on fire seasons and firefighting: "Fire seasons in the West lengthened by an average of 78 days between 1970 and 2015, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The longer seasons are straining resources... The challenge now is managing mega-fires to protect people's safety." Member Joan Anzelmo is quoted in the article. Sources: [The Conversation](#) and the [Jackson Hole News & Guide](#).

- *Cape Hatteras NS* – The park has just finished a study that shows which park sites are most vulnerable to a mix of erosion, rising sea levels and storm surge. They include both the Ocracoke and Bodie lighthouses and the light keeper homes at both locations. The park is working on a management plan. [Charlotte Observer](#).
- *Delaware Water Gap NRA* – The *Pike County Courier* published a story this week on the extensive damage done to the Dingmans Falls area, one of the park's main attractions, by this past winter's severe storms and by the ongoing ravages of hemlock woolly adelgid, an invasive insect that sucks the sap out of hemlocks and spruces. The damage to hemlocks has led many of them to fall, which will destroy the canopy that has heretofore made it a cool summer spot with its own small ecosystem. The author's assessment: "The crippling snow, the unusually relentless rain, the invasion of species from the south — they all have the earmarks of global warming. Storms are getting much more powerful, knocking down trees and powerlines and leaving local residents in the dark for days and weeks, and without access to their beloved parks." Source: [Pike County Courier](#).

Public Comments Solicited – A listing of some (but not all) of the planned actions in parks open to public comment on the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) [webpage](#), arranged in chronological order by their closing dates. **New entries are in red:**

- *Redwood N&SP: Greater Mill Creek Ecosystem Restoration* – The park is planning to rehabilitate the greater Mill Creek ecosystem and is asking for comments on proposed vegetation management, aquatic restoration, and road removal activities. Closes: **September 7th**. [PEPC link](#).
- *National Park Service: Potential Monument Designations* – The Service is seeking public comments on three potential national monument designations: the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home, Jackson, Mississippi; Mill Springs Battlefield, Nancy, Kentucky; and Camp Nelson, Nicholasville, Kentucky. Closes: **September 10th**. [PEPC link](#).
- *Gulf Islands NS: Personal Watercraft Use Management Plan* – The park's draft EIS on PWC management is now open for comment. Closes: **September 17th**. [PEPC link](#).

Editorial Opinions – Links to editorials and op-ed commentary on issues pertaining either directly or indirectly to the National Park Service.

- "[Republicans Gave Millions To The Rich While Shortchanging Park Rangers And Postal Carriers](#)," Jennifer Rubin, *Washington Post*. This opening paragraph will give you an idea of Rubin's outrage at the White House denying federal employees a raise while simultaneously pressing for new legislation that will make the rich richer: "It is as if the Republicans are trying to lose the midterms by a mile. This week, the administration announced two initiatives: Deny federal workers a measly 1.9 percent raise, and, by executive fiat, index capital gains to inflation, saving the rich billions. No, really." The emphasis is hers. Click on the link for the full piece. Source: [Washington Post](#).

- [“Our National Monuments Deserve Better,”](#) Editorial Board, *Washington Post*. The editorial begins by noting that the administration revealed plans last month to remove “huge tracts” of land from two Utah national monuments. It then reports this fact, which will surprise none of your: “The Interior Department inadvertently released documents in July suggesting that officials who are supposed to care for the federal government’s precious lands accentuated the benefits and played down the harms of removing millions of acres from national monuments.” The editorial concludes with this observation: “These unique, irreplaceable sites (Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bear’s Ears) deserve better than the Trump administration’s determined campaign to abolish environmental protections.”
- [“Zinke Is Letting Corporations Profit Off Our National Parks,”](#) Greg Zimmerman, *High Country News*. Zimmermann writes about Delaware North’s outrageous claims to the names of buildings it managed at Yosemite before losing the concession contract there and about the company’s ties with Zinke and the administration. His last two paragraphs are worth quoting in full: “A company this greedy, whose founders are cashing in by fleecing American taxpayers and our prized public lands, should not be welcomed in the halls of power. But we have come to expect this kind of behavior from members of Trump’s cabinet, Zinke included. In less than two years on the job, Zinke has thrown open the doors to campaign donors, family business friends and the executives of the very corporations he is supposed to be regulating. All the while, he has consistently ignored input from the American public, as well as from pretty much anyone who isn’t a potential donor. Now under the cloud of more than a dozen investigations, Zinke might have become so besmirched that even Trump finds him too much to stomach.”
- [“Dear EPA, Visit A National Park To See The Real Impacts Of Climate Change,”](#) Mike Murray, *The Hill*. Coalition member Mike Murray has an editorial in *The Hill* on EPA’s proposed new rule to replace the Clean Power Plan, “which would have significantly reduced air pollution from coal plants and helped curb future climate disasters.” The new plan, on the other hand, “would in actuality repeal key Clean Air Act measures, allowing more air pollution that drives climate change and threatens public health and the health of our public lands and wildlife.” He then suggest that EPA staff should visit a park to see firsthand what rules like this one are doing to them, citing a number of specific examples and offering this observation: “Climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing the environment and our public lands today. From national seashores to mountain parks, I can attest firsthand from my 34-year career as a National Park Service ranger protecting these places, that the impacts from climate change at national parks are real, urgent and getting worse.”

Conservation and Public Lands

Stories on conservation issues and on the management of America’s public lands:

Study Shows Fatigue As Main Cause Of Wildland Firefighting Accidents – A professor at the University of Idaho is closely tracking firefighter fatigue with the help of advanced motion monitors that use an algorithmic fatigue model originally developed for the U.S. military. Prof. Randy Brooks, who has a son on a crew that lost three firefighters on the Twisp Fire in 2015, launched the study at his son’s behest. Brooks and associate Callie Collins conducted a survey of more than 400 wildland firefighters. The majority indicated that the main contributors to accidents in fire operations were inadequate sleep and fatigue, both mental and physical. They found that “firefighters spent more than 42 percent of one month working in impaired conditions with reaction times slowed by as much as 34 to 100 percent – equivalent to having a blood-alcohol concentration of 0.05 to 0.11 or higher. That’s on the cusp of the legal limit for driving at 0.08.” Click on the following link to read more of the findings of this important study. Source: [University of Idaho College of Natural Resources](#).

Judge Blocks Idaho, Wyoming Grizzly Hunts – The Associated Press posted this story on August 30th: “A judge has blocked the opening of the first grizzly bear hunts to be held in the Rocky Mountains in more than 40 years. U.S. District Judge Dana Christensen's Thursday order comes as Idaho and Wyoming prepared to open the first grizzly bear hunting seasons in the Lower 48 states since 1974 on Saturday.” Source: [ABC Fox Montana](#).

Court Reinstates Clean Water Rule in 26 States – “A federal judge in South Carolina recently reinstated water protections in 26 states, following a lawsuit filed by environmental groups against the Trump administration for illegally suspending the Clean Water Rule early this year,” reports the Natural Resources Defense Council. “The law clarifies which bodies of water are covered by the Clean Water Act’s pollution-control programs. Although implementation is still on hold in 24 states, the ruling is a decisive win for the environment—and for the millions of Americans whose water supplies are now better protected from pollution.” The article on their web page also explains the importance of the victory. Source: [NRDC](#).

Climate and The Environment

Stories and articles pertaining to climate and environmental changes and their implications – direct or indirect – for national parks.

Death Valley Records Hottest Month Ever – This is a bit dated (the story came out on the last day of July) but probably still valid. *Forbes Magazine* reported on that date that the park had recorded the hottest month ever recorded anywhere on Earth in July. Here’s what magazine contributor Brian Brettschneider reported: “Death Valley, California, just wrapped up their hottest month on record. The famously hot location saw an average daily temperature in July 2018 of 108.1°F (42.3°C). Remember that this is the average daily temperature – not the daily high temperature... Last July (2017), the Death Valley station at the National Park Service Visitor’s Center reported a world record monthly temperature of 107.3°F (41.8°C). Assuming no other station bested Death Valley in July 2018...this means Death Valley broke the world record in back-to-back years! Let that sink in for a minute.” Source: [Forbes Magazine](#).

Climate Change and Ecosystem Transformation – The *Washington Post* recently ran a story by reporter Sarah Kaplan on the release of [a new report in the journal Science](#) that addresses the impacts that past climate changes had on the world’s ecosystems and the impacts that the current climate transformation will likely have: “A sweeping survey of global fossil and temperature records from the past 20,000 years suggests that Earth’s terrestrial ecosystems are at risk of another, even faster transformation unless aggressive action is taken against climate change.” The article contains this disturbing observation from ecologist Stephen Jackson, director of the U.S. Geological Survey’s Southwest Climate Adaptation Science Center and the lead author of the new study: ““Even as someone who has spent more than 40 years thinking about vegetation change looking into the past ... it is really hard for me to wrap my mind around the magnitude of change we’re talking about...It is concerning to me to think about how much change and how rapidly the change is likely to happen, and how little capacity we have to predict the exact course, which creates very large challenges for all of us out there who are trying to manage wildfire, fish, water, soil, endangered species — all those different ways in which natural ecosystems affect us.” Source: [Washington Post](#).

From The Archives

This section contains incidents taken from *Morning Report* issues published during the corresponding week (approximately) 25 years ago in 1993. All entries appear in the original verb tense.

- *Joshua Tree National Park* – At about 2 a.m. on August 28th, a Marine stationed at 29 Palms opened fire on three other Marines with a 12-gauge riot shotgun following an altercation at a local bar. County deputies responded and tracked the fleeing suspect into the park. A full-scale search by rangers, deputies and officers from the Naval Investigative Service was begun at dawn; a Marine Corps helicopter was also brought in. Utilizing their knowledge of the local terrain, rangers enlarged the search area around mid-morning. The suspect was spotted by the helicopter crew shortly afterwards and was taken into custody.
- *Chiricahua National Monument* – The park was struck by flash floods on Saturday, August 28th, and again on Tuesday, August 31st. The first series of floods occurred when the park received two to three hours of heavy rains from the remnants of Tropical Storm Hillary on top of the three inches of rain which had fallen over the previous three days. Waters in the

Rhyolite Canyon drainage in front of the visitor center rose within minutes, flooding the lower two-thirds of the parking area and a nearby intersection with two to three feet of water. There was just enough time to move all but one of the parked vehicles to higher ground. The visitor center was evacuated, and stranded visitors were escorted to higher ground in the maintenance area. Flooding of Madrone Canyon immediately behind the visitor center cut off access to the residence area for two hours and caused additional flooding across the road. Due to quick action by employees, all water was successfully diverted from entering the visitor center. Several campsites were evacuated because of rising waters in Bonita Creek. Water from Surprise Canyon ran across the park's scenic drive and into the campground, wiping out one campsite. A side drainage of Bonita Creek, fed by all of the above streams, overran its banks and flowed within feet of the superintendent's house before returning to the established channel. There were no injuries, and property damage was inflicted on only one vehicle. All lower elevation facilities were reopened by Sunday after removal of mud and debris. A heavy downpour at 3 a.m. on Tuesday morning spawned flash floods which were worse than Saturday's. Water totally surrounded the superintendent's house, but entered only the building's crawl space. Immediate response by park residents assured that all employees and visitors were secure and not in danger. Subsequent patrols of lower roadways revealed that large trees in the vicinity of the visitor center fell, that water came within a foot of flooding the visitor center and park administrative offices, that the roadway was washed out above the visitor center, and that a tremendous amount of mud and debris had been deposited. The park was closed until further notice. At the time of the report, the extent of damage to roadways and trails at higher elevations was unknown, and it was not yet clear whether visitors in the campground would be able to leave until temporary road work was completed.

- *Devil's Tower National Monument* – A 23-year-old climber from Minnesota was lead climbing the 5.8+ Soler route on the morning of August 23rd when he fell upside down about 25 feet and injured his elbow. He rested for a bit after the fall, then decided to attempt to lead the climb again. After leading up about 110 feet, his elbow began hurting, so he asked his belayer to lower him off the climb. The climber and his partner were unaware, however, that he was too far up to reach the belay ledge below. While he was being lowered, his partner, who was not tied into the rope, made a mistake and let the end of the rope slip through his belay device. The climber, who was still 50 feet up the route, fell backwards, landed on his back on a small ledge, and sustained a variety of injuries. Twelve members of the park's SAR team responded and performed a six-hour-long technical rescue operation. The rescue effort included a 300-foot, single-point suspension litter lowering down the vertical east face of the tower. At the time of the report, the climber was reported to be in good condition in Sundance Hospital. He was not wearing a helmet at the time of the accident.

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If you see something that might be of interest to Coalition members, send it to Bill Halainen at the Weekly National Park System Report: BHalainen@gmail.com. Please don't submit them via his personal email address or Facebook page.

A Closing Observation

The admonishment from Director Albright's 1933 farewell message to park employees regarding becoming 'just another Government bureau' is often cited, but not the full paragraph with its eloquent closing sentence:

"In this letter, perhaps one of my last official statements to you, let me urge you to be aggressive and vigorous in the fulfillment of your administrative duties. The National Park Service, from its beginning, has been an outstanding organization because its leaders, both in Washington and out in the field, worked increasingly and with high public spirit to carry out the noble policies and maintain the lofty ideals of the service as expressed in law and executive pronouncement. Do not let the service become 'just another Government bureau;' keep it youthful, vigorous, clean and strong. We are not here to simply protect what we have been given so far; we are here to try to be the future guardians of those areas as well as to sweep our protective arms around the vast lands which may well need us as man and his industrial world expand and encroach on the last bastions of wilderness."

[Director Horace Albright](#), 1933

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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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