



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

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Volume 2

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Incidents

Santa Monica Mountains NRA Park Closed Due To Fire; Historic Properties, Employee Homes Lost

The park was closed last Friday due to the rapidly approaching Woolsey Fire, which subsequently burned into the park and burned down the Western Town at Paramount Ranch. As of yesterday, 83% of NPS land in the park had been burned by the fire. Also destroyed in the fire were the historic Morrison Ranch House and Peter Strauss Ranch and three employee homes.

Western Town served as the location for numerous famous film and TV shoots for nearly a century, ever since Paramount Pictures leased it in 1927. Most recently, it was used as a location for the first and second seasons of HBO's *Westworld*. Western Town proper was created in the 1950s and used for TV shows that included *The Cisco Kid*, *Gunsmoke*, *The X-Files*, *The Dukes of Hazzard*, and *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman*.

As of yesterday, the Woolsey Fire had burned over 96,000 acres and was 35% contained. An estimated 435 structures had burned and another 57,000 were threatened.

The park will remain closed until further notice. See the incident information site below for further details, including press releases, updates and maps.

A GoFundMe site has been established to help out the park employees and families who lost their homes in the fire. [Click here to visit the site and make a contribution.](#)

Sources: [Deadline](#); [Woolsey Fire Incident Information](#); [Los Angeles Daily News](#).

Big Bend NP Man Falls To His Death While Scouting For Campsite

A Texas man on a canoe trip on the Rio Grande River died in a fall on November 7th.

Edward Lowe, 69, was on a five-day river trip through Boquillas Canyon with four others. While scouting a campsite about a mile downstream from the mouth of the canyon, Lowe reportedly fell headfirst off an embankment. CPR and other lifesaving efforts were begun, but were unavailing.

Two members of the party canoed upstream and called for help. An interagency team, including Big Bend rangers and U.S. Border Patrol agents, responded and recovered the body later that day.

Source: [Big Bend National Park](#).

National Park System Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents

Below are short follow-ups on incidents previously reported in this newsletter:

- *Yellowstone NP* – Gabriel Villalva, the man who walked up to the edge of Old Faithful this past summer and briefly stepped into it, has been banned from Yellowstone and Grand Tetons for five years. He also waived a preliminary hearing this week regarding his arrest in Cheyenne following a police pursuit and remains jailed on \$10,000 cash bond. An arraignment date hasn't been set. Source: [Great Falls Tribune](#).

Official 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.

Department of the Interior DOI Border Arrests Of Illegal Aliens Jumps 4000%

On November 9th, the Department of the Interior issued a press release with this headline: “Arrests of Illegal Aliens on Federal Borderlands Increased by Nearly 4,000% under Trump/Zinke Surge Operations.” Under it was this subtitle: “DOI Law Enforcement also staging in anticipation of approaching caravan.” Excerpts follow:

“U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke today announced that in the first six months of a pilot program to provide an increased Interior law enforcement presence on identified Interior lands along the US-Mexico border, arrests of illegal aliens entering the United States increased by nearly 4,000 percent.

“In May of 2018, Secretary Zinke directed a Border Support Surge initiative, which coordinated law enforcement officers from the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Border Patrol to execute high level operations to patrol and protect the border with Mexico. The team saw immediate results. This increased posture provides greater situational awareness on illegal activities within public lands and parks, and allows for greater collaboration and information sharing between U.S. Border Patrol and Interior to minimize criminal activity in these areas. Interior is home to about 4,000 federal law enforcement officers and this is the first time the force has been used in this capacity...

“During the first six months of the border surge, Interior law enforcement officers tallied:

- 4,010 apprehensions have been made and turned over to the custody of the U.S. Border Patrol
- 224 turn-backs (Were coming into the US, but turned around when they saw law enforcement)
- 469 apprehended on non-federal lands
- 2,356 pounds of drugs seized
- Several vehicles, firearms, and other items confiscated

“The 4,000 percent increase compares the first six months of the surge (2018) to the same six months of the last year of the Obama Administration (2016), and assesses the same geographic areas. From May 2016 until October 2016, Interior law enforcement apprehended and turned over 126 illegal aliens to the U.S. Border Patrol. During the same time period in 2018, Interior apprehended and turned over 4,010 illegal aliens to the U.S. Border Patrol.

“The Department of the Interior manages approximately 40% of the southwest border. Interior-managed properties along the southwest border include national park units, national wildlife refuges, and public lands under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of

Reclamation. There are also Tribal Reservations and Native American Communities along or near the border.”

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

Congress Weekly Legislative Roundup

New Public Laws

Nothing to report.

Senate

The Senate reconvened on November 13th for the lame-duck session of the 115th Congress.

House

The House reconvened on November 13th for the lame-duck session of the 115th Congress.

Election Update

Democrats have gained control of the House of Representatives for the 116th Congress, where they will hold 226 seats and the Republicans will hold 198 seats. As this is being written (November 10th), eleven House races remain undecided, with the Democrats leading in five and the Republicans leading in six.

The Republicans have retained control of the Senate, where they will hold 51 seats while the Democrats will hold 46 seats. As of this date, three races are still undecided. In Florida and Arizona votes are still being tabulated, and a run-off election will be held in December for a seat in Mississippi as no candidate received a majority vote in the November election.

Based on the election results, the following Representatives are expected to be the new chairs of House committees that could impact the National Park Service in the 116th Congress:

- Appropriations Committee: Nita Lowey (D-NY)
- Budget Committee: John Yarmouth (D-KY)
- Natural Resources Committee: Raul Grijalva (D-AZ)
- Oversight and Government Reform Committee: Elijah Cummings (D-MD)
- Rules Committee: Jim McGovern (D-MA)

In the Senate, the following are expected to retain their positions as chairs:

- Appropriations Committee: Richard Shelby (R-MS)
- Budget Committee: Mike Enzi (R-WY)
- Energy and Natural Resources Committee: Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)
- Environment Committee: John Barrasso (R-WY)
- Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs – Ron Johnson (R-WI)
- Indian Affairs Committee: John Hoeven (R-ND)

Please note that these potential committee chairs could change once the 116th Congress convenes in January. Additional updates will be provided when further information is available and the final election results are tabulated.

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

Park People, Park Friends

NPS Alumni

Passing Of William Murtagh

William J. Murtagh, 95, the first keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, died on October 28th. The following are the opening paragraphs of his obituary in the *New York Times*; the full obit can be read at the newspaper's website below.

“Hoping to reverse what he called ‘the visual trashing of America’ inflicted by urban renewal bulldozers and interstate highway billboards, Dr. Murtagh galvanized architects, historians, preservationists, archaeologists, local civic leaders and an informed public to consider places worth saving. He was driven, he said, by a concern ‘for what we might call the cultural ecology of the country.’

“For more than five decades, Dr. Murtagh predominated in the field of preservation. A vice president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, he taught and started preservation programs at Columbia University, the University of Maryland and the University of Hawaii and wrote the discipline's first leading textbook, *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America*, originally published in 1988.

“Dr. Murtagh was the first steward of the National Register, the official federal list, established in 1966, of historic places worthy of preservation. He held that post from 1967 to 1979.”

Source: [New York Times](#).

NPS Alumni

Passing of Tom McGrath

Tom McGrath, 68, superintendent of the Service's Historic Preservation Training Center from 1990 to 2013, died last Thursday of a heart attack.

Tom had a distinguished 36-year career with the National Park Service, with stints at Denver Service Center, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office prior to joining what was then called the Williamsport Preservation Training Center in 1990. A leader in historic preservation whose center trained hundreds of NPS craftsmen, Tom was awarded the NPS Appleman-Judd-Lewis Award for Excellence in Cultural Resource Management in 2008. He was also honored as a fellow of both the Association for Preservation Technology in 2004 and the American Institute of Architects in 2005.

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. on Saturday, November 17th, at St. Martin's in-the-Field Episcopal Church, 375 Benfield Road, Severna Park, MD 21146. A reception will follow at the McGrath's home at 26 Windward Drive in Severna Park.

Source: Joy Beasley, acting associate director for cultural resources, partnerships and science, National Park Service, via member Steve Hastings.

News Reports and Releases

A brief summary of recent news stories, web postings and agency press releases pertaining to the Service, the federal government, the administration, DOI, and other public land management agencies that have bearing on the NPS.

Administration

Courts Are Checking Administration's Efforts To Dump Environmental Regs – “It is a popular fiction that despite its many foibles, the Trump administration has been successful in dismantling environmental regulations,” writes David Hayes in *Slate*. “Given the sheer number of attacks levied on

energy and environmental regulations involving the coal, oil, gas, and automotive industries, casual observers might reasonably conclude that the administration is deploying a successful deregulatory strategy. It is not.” Hayes goes on: “The administration has made multiple efforts to put Obama-era regulatory requirements on ice, but these efforts have largely failed. With its delay tactics in tatters, the administration is now taking a different approach—instead of just stopping old regulations, it’s surfacing new replacement rules that would let industry walk away from environmental and public-health and safety obligations that have solid evidentiary support and broad appeal. But having squandered half of its four-year term, the White House faces an uphill climb in developing and finalizing many of its major environmental rollback initiatives, and getting them past now-skeptical courts, before the clock runs out.” The article provides some examples of the ongoing fights over efforts at deregulation. Source: [Slate](#).

Department of the Interior

US Attorney Won’t Prosecute Superintendent For Violations Alleged By DOI OIG – The Office of the U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Pennsylvania has rejected requests by DOI’s OIG to prosecute Ed Clark, Gettysburg’s superintendent, for alleged violations of various travel approval and reimbursement regulations. Clark’s attorneys at the Employment Law Group have issued a statement that rebuts the OIG charges and includes observations by Clark about the Service’s shortcomings in this case, including its record of failing to provide adequate guidance to park officials. The latter seems particularly ironic, as the OIG recently circulated a report that detailed the agency’s lack of internal controls, oversight, and guidance regarding the use of donated funds from philanthropic partners. You can read the statement at [this link](#) and the OIG report at [this link](#). Source: [The Employment Law Group](#).

The Continuing Adventures Of Ryan Zinke – More recent news stories on the Secretary of the Interior from the nation’s media:

- *Zinke and the Kerfuffle* – The headline on this story from the November 6th *Washington Post* provides forewarning that this is likely to be a strange tale: “Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke Called Police On His Neighbors Monday Night In A Kerfuffle Outside His Capitol Hill Home.” And so it proves to be: A non-government Mercedes SUV sits idling for hours in front of Zinke’s home, taking up three parking spaces (a near felony in DC); neighbors try without luck to get the driver to take only one; a [kerfuffle](#) ensues; a man claiming to be Zinke comes to the door to see what’s going on; a neighbor challenges him and the man reveals he’s not Zinke; Zinke calls the police (US Park Police in this case) regarding what a DOI spokesperson said was “a suspicious individual staking out his home and guests” (a neighbor); three or four men leave the house and get into the SUV; a USPP sergeant arrives and determines that the kerfuffle has ended. No charges, no actions, just shaking heads. Source: [Washington Post](#).
- *Zinke and the Trophy Hunter* – Steven Chancellor, a Trump fundraiser and an enthusiastic trophy hunter who Zinke appointed last March to a new International Wildlife Conservation Council, has since obtained permits to import the heads and hides of at least three male lions from Africa. “An avid trophy hunter, Chancellor has killed hundreds of exotic animals, including at least 18 lions, 13 leopards, six elephants and two rhinos,” reports *Huffington Post*. “The retroactive permits, issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in early June and obtained...through a public records request, apply to two lions Chancellor killed for sport in 2017 and a third he hunted in 2016.” Said a senior member of the Center for Biological Diversity: “You can’t point to a more obvious conflict of interest. If any doubt remained, this unsavory situation demonstrates conclusively that Secretary Zinke is in bed with the trophy hunting industry.” Source: [Huffington Post](#).
- *Zinke, Robert E. Lee and Martin Luther King, Jr.* – “Ryan Zinke, the embattled secretary of the Interior Department, suggested in a confused comparison that Robert E. Lee, the Confederate general who fought to preserve slavery, was as much an American hero as civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. during a speech on [October 27th], drawing renewed scrutiny of Zinke’s record on racial issues,” reports the *Huffington Post*. Zinke made the observation while speaking at a ceremony designating Camp Nelson, a Union recruitment and training depot in

Kentucky for black soldiers during the Civil War, as a national monument and the Service's newest unit. Here's what he said, trying to make a link of some kind between the King Memorial, Lincoln Memorial and Lee's home in Arlington; if you can clarify his meaning, send along a note: "I like to think that Lincoln doesn't have his back to General Lee. He's in front of him. There's a difference. Similar to Martin Luther King doesn't have his back to Lincoln. He's in front of Lincoln as we march together to form a more perfect union." Source: [Huffington Post](#).

- *Zinke and the Blue House* – "Less than 24 hours after Republicans lost their House majority, Democrats vowed to take Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to task for a number of questionable actions and business deals, including one that's under investigation by the Department of Justice," reported *The Hill* on November 8th. "When the new Congress starts Jan. 3, Democrats on the House Natural Resources Committee will, for the first time since Zinke took office in March 2017, have the authority to compel him and others at the Interior Department to testify and provide records." Source: [The Hill](#).
- *Zinke Said To Be Preparing To Leave* – The headline in the November 8th *Politico* reads "Zinke Prepares To Leave Trump's Cabinet." The lead paragraphs: "Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has been exploring potential roles with Fox News, the energy industry or other businesses amid growing signs that he will leave President Donald Trump's cabinet as he faces investigations into his ethics, according to people knowledgeable about the discussions. The news comes just a day after Trump told reporters that word on Zinke's fate may come 'in about a week' — and as the president is in the early stages of what could be a dramatic post-election house-cleaning of cabinet officials and top aides..." Source: [Politico](#).
- *No, Wait...Zinke Said To Be Planning On Staying* – This just in from the Associated Press: "U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke declared Monday he's '100 percent confident' no wrongdoing will be found in pending ethics investigations that have stirred speculation he could get ousted from President Donald Trump's Cabinet...In an interview with The Associated Press, Zinke said he has spoken in recent days with Trump, Vice President Mike Pence and White House Chief of Staff John Kelly about the probes and they remain supportive. He denied any wrongdoing." Said Zinke: "I'm 100 percent confident that every investigation will always end up in the same conclusion, which is that I follow all rules, procedures and, most importantly the law. I have no desire to leave. I know I'm effective and doing the right thing." Source: [Associated Press](#).

National Park Service and System

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

Confirmation Hearings For Director To Be Held Thursday – The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources will hold a hearing at 10 a.m. on Thursday, November 15th, to consider the nominations of three people to positions in the administration, including Dave Vela as director of the NPS. The hearing will be webcast live on [the committee's website](#) and an archived video will be available shortly after the hearing is complete. Witness testimony will be available on the website at the start of the hearing. Source: [Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources](#).

Around The Parks – Brief reports on parks and regions, culled either from park press releases or from newspapers, with links to the source news articles. The reports are in alphabetical order by park name.

- *Golden Gate NRA* – The 14-acre Tunnel Tops park, a major Presidio Trust project that is in the early stages of construction on top of the Presidio Parkway, is expected to cost \$90 million. No problem, this is San Francisco – the Trust to date has raised \$72 million from 92 donors, 22 of whom donated more than \$1 million. Tunnel Tops will feature overlooks of the Golden Gate Bridge and Alcatraz, a community plaza, walking and jogging trails, meadows, picnic grounds and interactive playscapes for children. The project also includes renovating Crissy Field Center and constructing two adjacent buildings to form a three-acre youth campus that will serve 100,000 students a year. Source: [San Francisco Business Times](#).

- *Great Smoky Mountains NP* – The park and its nonprofit partner, Discover Life in America, recently celebrated the 20th anniversary of the All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory with the announcement of the attainment of a major milestone – the discovery in the park of the thousandth species new to science by participants in ATBI. Overall, five new lichens were found in the park by ATBI researchers, who honored park staff by naming the lichens after them – Susan Sachs, education branch chief (*Lecanora sachsiiana*); Paul Super, science coordinator for 17 years at Purchase Knob (*Pertusaria superiana*); Becky Nichols, park entomologist (*Leprocaulon nicholsiae*); Keith Langdon, retired inventory and monitoring branch chief (*Heterodermia langdoniana*); and Emily Darling, a former education technician (*Lecanora darlingiae*). Source: [Asheville Citizen-Times](#).
- *Jimmy Carter NHS* – The Park Service is developing a DCP for the Carter Home and property and is taking public comments through December 11th. The project area is a 10.8-acre parcel located north of Church Street in Plains, Georgia. The Carter home is currently a secured residence, as is the property around it, but will eventually be opened to the public for interpretive visits. [Click on this link](#) to go to the PEPC webpage for entering comments. Source: [Albany Herald](#).
- *Kalaupapa NHP* – The park will be releasing a revised GMP and EA for public review on November 15th. It will be open for comment for 30 days at the [park's PEPC website](#). Source: [Kalaupapa NHP](#).
- *Lake Mead NRA* – Katherine Landing at Lake Mohave Marina, a popular destination for outdoor recreation enthusiasts, recently earned the coveted “Clean Marine” certification for its dedication to protecting its waters from pollution. The Clean Marine Program, a partnership of private marina owners, government marina operators, boatyards and yacht clubs, aims to ensure that clean facilities exist in boating communities and protect waterways from pollution. In order to win the certification, Katherine Landing met the most rigorous best management practice standards to help prevent or reduce water pollution, from good boat-keeping practices and education efforts to marina rules, spill prevention and rapid cleanup plans. An experienced impartial industry team, comprised of a cross-section of professionals, review marinas every five years after certification. Source: [Mohave Valley Daily News](#).

The Conservation Crisis

This section covers the myriad interconnected, conservation-related threats that are transforming the national parks, their ecosystems, and the world ecosystem, often simultaneously.

Philanthropist Will Donate \$1 Billion Toward Worldwide Conservation Efforts – Let’s begin with some good news for a change. On October 31st, philanthropist and conservationist Hansjörg Wyss announced in the *New York Times* that he will donate \$1 billion to worldwide conservation programs over the next decade: “I have decided to donate \$1 billion over the next decade to help accelerate land and ocean conservation efforts around the world, with the goal of protecting 30 percent of the planet’s surface by 2030...I believe this ambitious goal is achievable because I’ve seen what can be accomplished.” Wyss notes the many challenges presented to protecting these areas are partially offset by “another, encouraging side to this depressing story.” That, he says, is “a simple idea, born in the United States in the 19th century and now racing around the globe [that] may yet preserve a substantial portion of our planet in a natural state. It is the idea that wild lands and waters are best conserved not in private hands, locked behind gates, but as public national parks, wildlife refuges and marine reserves, forever open for everyone to experience and explore.” He says that the inspiration to do this began when he visited national parks when he was young – it’s nice to imagine that walks or talks by an interpretive ranger or two may have begun him on this road. His concluding comments: “We need to embrace the radical, time-tested and profoundly democratic idea of public-land protection that was invented in the United States, tested in Yellowstone and Yosemite, and now proven the world over. For the sake of all living things, let’s see to it that far more of our planet is protected by the people, for the people and for all time.” Source: [New York Times](#).

Scientists Issue Warning On Rapidly Disappearing Wilderness Worldwide – A group of seven researchers studying the world’s terrestrial and oceanic wilderness areas has an opinion piece in *Nature* entitled “Protect The Last Of The Wild.” Excerpts follow: “A century ago, only 15% of Earth’s surface was used to grow crops and raise livestock. Today, more than 77% of land (excluding Antarctica) and 87% of the ocean has been modified by the direct effects of human activities...Between 1993 and 2009, an area of terrestrial wilderness larger than India — a staggering 3.3 million square kilometers — was lost [due] to human settlement, farming, mining and other pressures. In the ocean, areas that are free of industrial fishing, pollution and shipping are almost completely confined to the polar regions. Numerous studies are revealing that Earth’s remaining wilderness areas are increasingly important buffers against the effects of climate change and other human impacts. But, so far, the contribution of intact ecosystems has not been an explicit target in any international policy framework, such as the United Nations’ Strategic Plan for Biodiversity or the Paris climate agreement. This must change if we are to prevent Earth’s intact ecosystems from disappearing completely.”

Source: [Nature](#).

Heat Is Building In The Oceans Faster Than Expected – “The world’s oceans have been soaking up far more excess heat in recent decades than scientists realized, suggesting that Earth could be set to warm even faster than predicted in the years ahead, according to new research published [October 31st],” write Chris Mooney and Brad Dennis in the *Washington Post*. “The higher-than-expected amount of heat in the oceans means more heat is being retained within Earth’s climate system each year, rather than escaping into space. In essence, more heat in the oceans signals that global warming is more advanced than scientists thought.” That finding leads to this cheery observation: “If ocean temperatures are rising more rapidly than previously calculated, that could leave nations even less time to dramatically cut the world’s emissions of carbon dioxide, in the hope of limiting global warming to the ambitious goal of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above preindustrial levels by the end of this century.” Source: [Washington Post](#).

Jet Stream Changes Are Bringing About More Severe Weather – According to a new study, reported on in *Inside Climate News*, “greenhouse gases are increasingly disrupting the jet stream, a powerful river of winds that steers weather systems in the Northern Hemisphere. That’s causing more frequent summer droughts, floods and wildfires...The findings suggest that summers like 2018, when the jet stream drove extreme weather on an unprecedented scale across the Northern Hemisphere, will be 50 percent more frequent by the end of the century if emissions of carbon dioxide and other climate pollutants from industry, agriculture and the burning of fossil fuels continue at a high rate. In a worst-case scenario, there could be a near-tripling of such extreme jet stream events, but other factors, like aerosol emissions, are a wild card...” Source: [Inside Climate News](#).

Database Assesses Climate Risk To 270 US Cities – A new and useful tool has been created that can be used by parks in and near urban areas to assess their risks from climate change. The [Urban Adaptation Assessment](#) is an interactive database funded by the Kresge Foundation and led by the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative that provides a wealth of data that can be used to make decisions on how best to adapt and prepare for coming changes. It incorporates data from cities with over 100,000 people in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. Source: [Notre Dame University](#).

National Parks: Threats and Remedies – Here’s a summary of news stories about park-specific conservation and climate-related issues:

- *Loxahatchee NWR/Everglades NP* – On October 31st, the Palm Beach Post ran a report on an invasive that’s as much of a problem for the Everglades as its exotic pythons – the pygidium plant, also known as [Old World climbing fern](#) (although the story concerns attempts to eradicate it from Loxahatchee NWR, the refuge and park are part of the same ecosystem). The fern kills native swamp bay, wax myrtle and dahoon holly trees with a smothering blanket of lime green leaves. Source: [Palm Beach Post](#).
- *Everglades NP* – Scientists from Florida International University have published [a study](#) which finds that some parts of the Everglades with peat soil can release up to three times the normal amount of carbon dioxide when salinity levels are high and water levels are low. Peat soil traps

carbon dioxide when water levels are high, but intruding saltwater can cause peat soil to break down and release large amounts of carbon. “The carbon that is potentially being lost from the Everglades during these events is comparable to the carbon dioxide emitted by 35,000 cars annually,” said Ben Wilson, author of the study. “It shows [that] even if salinity increases gradually with sea level rise, as long as the coastal Everglades receives more freshwater some of its negative impacts can be mitigated.” Negative impacts are already being seen – in the area studied, 65 percent of plant roots in fresh water marshes and 72 percent of roots in brackish water marshes were found to have died because of increased salinity levels brought on by sea level rise. Source: [FIU News](#).

- *Joshua Tree NP* – The Joshua trees that draw so many people to the park are now at risk, reports *Our Daily Planet*. “What allows Joshua trees to flourish in such arid conditions is the small yucca moth that fertilizes the trees, forming a very special symbiotic relationship between two desert dwellers. Unfortunately, a new study shows that climate change is making it difficult for both the trees and the moths to survive in this stretch of Mojave desert.” Researchers were unable to find any moths in either the southern part or the higher-elevation northern end of the park; although they were more successful at the middle elevations in the park’s center, they’re not expected to last long there. In the hottest parts of the park there are already more dead trees than living ones. Source: [Our Daily Planet](#).
- *Lake Mead NRA* – The continuing drop in the level of Lake Mead is reaching critical proportions. In August, the Bureau of Reclamation reported a 57 percent probability that the lake level will fall below 1,075 feet above sea level by 2020; if it does so, a shortage declaration will be issued and cuts to water users will be scheduled (the lake level in September was 1,078 feet). There are impacts specific to the park as well – it costs about \$2 million for every ten foot drop in the water level, mostly due to the cost of extending boat ramps. Source: [Arizona Capitol Times](#).
- *Yellowstone NP* – A November 11th Associated Press story reports on a conservation success story – “the return of wolves and cougars to Yellowstone National Park is helping restore a landscape that had been altered in their absence and allowing streams to return to a more natural state...” The article cites a study made by researchers from Oregon State University College of Forestry. Here’s a summary: “The widespread extermination of wolves and cougars early last century meant the elk herds the two carnivores prey on were able to grow in size. The swollen herds ate away willow plants and other vegetation along the park’s streams, causing erosion damage. But in recent years, resurgent populations of wolves and cougars have restored the park’s natural balance by knocking back elk numbers and changing the herds’ behaviors...As a result, willows are rebounding and streams are recovering...” Source: [The Oregonian](#).

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; “submitters” are those people who originally submitted the incident report.

- *Yosemite NP* – An investigation into allegations of commercial hunters guiding hunts along the boundaries of and within the park was begun in 1991 and continued (along with surveillance operations) through the hunting seasons of 1991, 1992 and 1993. Thirteen suspects were identified and over 80 violations of federal and state wildlife laws were documented, including guiding without a license, conspiracy to guide without a license, sale of bear gall bladders and hides, closed season kills, and numerous violations of state fish and game codes. At sunrise on October 18th, NPS investigators and rangers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agents, and California Fish and Game Department wardens contacted these suspects at their residences. During subsequent searches and interviews, a bear hide and three deer heads were seized and a household marijuana cultivation operation was discovered. Indictments are currently pending on seven of the suspects through the Tuolumne County district attorney’s office.

Investigation into the remaining six suspects will continue. The man who was cultivating the marijuana was arrested along with his wife and son; 26 firearms were seized from their residence. All of the suspects are known to operate throughout central and northern California. Names are being withheld pending indictments. Criminal investigators Jeff Sullivan and J.R. Tomasovic initiated the investigation. Submitted by Steve Martin.

- *Blue Ridge Parkway* – While checking a jeep which had been parked near the steep cliffs at milepost 425 for an extended period of time, rangers contacted two people from Aiken, South Carolina. Both appeared to be under the influence of alcohol and/or some controlled substance. During the encounter, one of them became argumentative and uncooperative and refused to leash his growling German shepherd, which he claimed would bite on command. After convincing him to put the dog in the jeep, the rangers patted him down and found a handgun in his pants underneath his jacket and marijuana in his pocket. He again became uncooperative; at one point, he took a defensive stance, saying that he was ex-military and knew judo. He was eventually handcuffed and seat-belted in the rear of a patrol vehicle. While the rangers began the process of arresting the second person, he freed himself from the seatbelt and began kicking, yelling and screaming. Although sprayed with oleoresin capsicum (OC), he was able to kick out the rear door window and exit face first through the window. He was sprayed again with OC, but was able to leap over the steep, rocky embankment. Rangers finally located him about 100 feet down from the top. He was strapped to a litter, winched to the top, taken to a local medical facility for treatment of his minor injuries, then taken to jail. Seven charges were filed against him and three more against the second person. Submitted by CRO.
- *New River Gorge NR* – Bridge Day was held on October 16th at the New River Gorge Bridge in Fayetteville, West Virginia. The annual event drew a crowd to the area estimated at over 125,000. The event has international fame for its high adventure activities, including parachuting, bungee jumping and rappelling off the bridge. During the period between 9 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., 458 registered BASE jumpers made a total of 502 parachute jumps from the bridge, approximately 125 rappellers ascended and descended distances from 600 to 800 feet, and a world record bungee jump was made. A total of 102 parachutists landed in the park and required rescue by NPS personnel. There were 13 injuries from BASE jumping accidents, including nine that required transport to and treatment at a local hospital. The bungee jump was made by seven people in a custom-made metal basket which plunged about 850 feet into the gorge to a point about 25 feet above the river before springing back. One injury occurred from the jump when the bungee basket did not release properly and trapped one of the participants between one of the bridle ropes and the basket. This person suffered severe rope burns across the chest and shoulder and was taken to a local hospital. The worst injury of the day occurred when an 18-year-old male fell about 25 feet from a cliff face in the area of the bridge buttress while free climbing. He suffered a fractured thoracic vertebrae and his spinal cord was severed; he's expected to remain permanently paralyzed from the fracture point down. The Mid-Atlantic Region's all-risk management (ARM) team participated in the management of the event for the first time. The event went very smoothly, relatively speaking, with few major injuries to participants and none to the over 35 NPS employees involved in rescue operations, EMS and law enforcement. One contracted boat rescuer was injured when his thumb got caught in the bight of a parachute cord and was severed while rescuing a parachutist from the river. Submitted by Rick Brown.

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This newsletter comes to you through the efforts of a number of people:

- Production: Steve Pittleman
- Regular Correspondents: Don Hellmann, Dennis Burnett, Rick Smith, and Duncan Morrow
- Issue Contributors: Bill Walters, Joan Anzelmo, Steve Hastings, Maureen Finnerty

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

"[In order to protect the Earth] we need to embrace the radical, time-tested and profoundly democratic idea of public-land protection that was invented in the United States, tested in Yellowstone and Yosemite, and now proven the world over. For the sake of all living things, let's see to it that far more of our planet is protected by the people, for the people and for all time."

Philanthropist and conservationist [Hansjörg Wyss](#) (see article in "Conservation Crisis" above for more).

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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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