



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

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Editor's Note

There will be no newsletter next week. The next edition will appear on Wednesday, February 14th.

Incidents

National Park System Some Take Advantage Of Government Shutdown

Although the parks weren't overrun with violators during last week's brief government shutdown, several incidents have been reported:

- *Yellowstone National Park* – Tourists on a commercial snowmobile broke park rules by driving too close to Old Faithful geyser on Sunday, January 21st, at a time when most staff was furloughed during the partial government shutdown. A concession operator who is authorized to conduct snowmobile tours through Yellowstone — and was allowed to continue doing so even as most park employees stopped work that weekend — violated park rules. The culprits were spotted on a park webcam and the concessioner faces a mandatory court appearance. The geyser was not harmed.
- *Gettysburg National Military Park* – A family with metal detectors and a drone — both of which are prohibited — entered the park over the weekend. Rangers intercepted them and used the incident as “an educational opportunity,” said a park spokesman, then let them go without a citation.
- *Zion National Park* – A poacher killed a pregnant elk inside Zion National Park the weekend before last, apparently taking advantage of park security being limited because of the government shutdown. Remains of the elk were found in Lee Valley. An investigation is underway.

If you've heard of any other incidents, please send them along.

Sources: [Washington Post](#) and [St. George Spectrum](#).

Acadia National Park Winter Storm And Floods Damage Park Facilities

Recent winter storms and flooding have encased the Sieur de Monts Nature Center, parking lots, bathroom structures, Spring House, and Wild Gardens of Acadia in more than a foot of water and ice. The full extent of damage remains unknown. The parking lot is closed until further notice

Frozen ground, snow accumulations and rainfall last week left water in areas that would normally flood once every 25 years. That water, plus two subsequent temperature spikes and plunges, created the flooding, said park spokeswoman Christie Anastasia.

“This kind of flooding normally happens in spring when we don’t have these freezing temperatures,” Anastasia said. “I’d attribute it to changing weather patterns. I think the words that would be hovering over most scientists’ heads right now would be ‘climate change.’”

Sources: [Acadia National Park news release](#), [Bangor Daily News](#).

Death Valley National Park Two Plead Guilty To Break-In At Devils Hole

Two men have pled guilty to federal charges stemming from a 2016 break-in at Devils Hole, a protected spring pool in the park that is home to a critically endangered fish.

Edgar Reyes of North Las Vegas and Steven Schwinkendorf of Pahrump pleaded guilty to destruction of government property for their actions at Devils Hole on April 30, 2016. The men fired a gun and damaged government equipment, including locks, the security system, scientific monitoring equipment and several signs at the water-filled cavern about 90 miles west of Las Vegas.

As part of their plea, they agreed to pay \$5,622.83 in restitution and face a maximum penalty of up to one year in prison and a fine of \$100,000. Reyes and Schwinkendorf are to be sentenced next month.

A third man, Trenton Sargent of Indian Springs, faces charges of destruction of government property, violating the Endangered Species Act, and illegal possession of a firearm and ammunition by a felon.

After the men broke into the fenced cavern, Sargent waded into the water and onto a shallow rocky shelf where the endangered Devils Hole pupfish feeds, mates and lays its eggs. The Devils Hole pupfish has been under federal protection since 1967. Only about 100 are left in the wild, and the only place they live is in Devils Hole.

Investigators said the men were caught with the help of tips from the public.

Sources: [Death Valley NP news release](#), [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#).

News From Around Washington

Reports from Capitol Hill, the White House, the Department of the Interior, the National Park Service and other related agencies and NGO’s.

Capitol Hill Weekly Legislative Roundup

New Public Laws

On January 22nd, the president signed into law H.R. 195, which allows continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2018 for federal agencies, including the Department of the Interior, through February 8, 2018. (P.L. 115-120).

Senate

On January 30th, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee will vote on the nominations of Susan Combs of Texas to be assistant secretary for policy, management and budget, and Ryan Douglas Nelson of Idaho to be solicitor, Department of the Interior.

On February 7th, the Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining will have a hearing, among other bills, on:

- H.R. 995, to require the Department of the Interior to modernize terms used to describe the racial background or place of origin of people in regulations concerning the 1974 development plan for Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, DC, among other provisions.
- S. 1481, to make technical corrections to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Sec. 4 of the bill would require the Secretary of the Interior to grant the Shishmaref Native Corporation a perpetual easement of approximately 300 feet that crosses the Bering Land Bridge National Preserve to permit a surface transportation route between the Village of Shishmaref and the general area of Ear Mountain, Alaska.

House

Nothing to report.

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

Park People, Friends and Allies

Pacific West Region

Stan Austin Named Regional Director

Stanley J. Austin, currently the regional director in Southeast Region, will be taking over Pacific West Region.

In his new role, Austin will oversee operations for more than 60 national parks, 241 national historic landmarks, 100 national natural landmarks and many other associated sites within the eight states of California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Arizona and Montana, the territories of Guam and American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands. The region's parks host 66 million visitors a year and contribute \$5 billion to local economies.

Austin has been regional director for Southeast Region since 2013. Over the past five years, he has guided the region through many complex and sensitive issues, including restoration of the Everglades, multiple hurricanes and fires, and operational and workplace reform. He supported the expansion and name change of Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park and oversaw the introduction of four new parks into the National Park System.

Austin began his career with the National Park Service at Gateway National Recreation Area as an interpretive park ranger, resource management specialist, and law enforcement ranger. He later served as deputy superintendent of Rocky Mountain National Park, superintendent of Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, acting deputy superintendent at Yosemite National Park, and superintendent at Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

As a Mike Mansfield Fellow, Austin spent two years in Tokyo working with the government of Japan's Ministries of Construction and Environment. He also served on the Hurricane Mitch federal response team in Nicaragua providing hurricane relief assistance.

A New Jersey native, Austin earned a bachelor of science in environmental sciences with a focus on biology from Rutgers University.

Austin will begin his assignment in Pacific West Region this spring.

Source: [WASO Office of Communications news release](#).

Yosemite National Park Mike Reynolds Selected As Superintendent

Secretary Zinke has named Mike Reynolds Yosemite's new superintendent. As previously noted, he also name Dan Smith the Service's acting director, replacing Reynolds, who has exercised the authority of NPS director since January 3, 2017.

Reynolds, a 31-year NPS veteran and a third-generation NPS employee, grew up in Yosemite and later returned to the park as a resource manager, planner and division chief.

Reynolds has served as the deputy director for operations of the NPS since 2016, and spent the majority of his tenure serving as NPS acting director.

Reynolds will begin his assignment at Yosemite in early March.

Source: [WASO Office of Communications news release](#).

Cape Cod National Seashore Brian Carlstrom To Head Park

Brian Carlstrom has been named the new superintendent of Cape Cod National Seashore. Carlstrom currently serves as deputy associate director for the Natural Resource Stewardship and Science Directorate in Washington, where he develops and implements resource stewardship and science policies and direction Servicewide. He will begin his new assignment in April, replacing George Price, who retired in May last year.

Carlstrom is a 30-year NPS employee. At NRSS, where he has worked since 2015, he provides leadership to the Environmental Quality Division, Climate Change Response Program and National Natural Landmarks Program, and oversees the directorate's budget and communications efforts.

Before his work at NRSS, his park experiences included tours as lead park ranger at Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts, acting superintendent and chief of resources at Devils Tower National Monument, chief of resources management at Prince William Forest Park, deputy superintendent and chief of resources at Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, and superintendent at Biscayne National Park.

Carlstrom has a bachelor of arts in parks and recreation with an environmental management certificate from George Mason University and has completed graduate work in geographic information systems, environmental science, and public administration at GMU. Originally from Minnesota, he and his wife look forward to moving to the Cape.

Source: [Northeast Regional Office news release](#).

Blue Ridge Parkway J.D. Lee Chosen As Park's Superintendent

J.D. Lee has been named superintendent of Blue Ridge Parkway. Lee has been the deputy superintendent at Big Cypress National Preserve for the past eight years. He will assume his new duties on February 18th.

A graduate of Ball State University in Indiana with a bachelor of science degree, Lee is a 30-year veteran of the NPS, beginning his career as a seasonal park ranger and wildland firefighter at Great Smoky Mountains National Park. He has extensive experience working with NPS staff, partners, concessioners and contractors to provide essential visitor services and a comprehensive understanding of resource preservation.

Prior to his tour at Big Cypress, Lee was chief ranger at Intermountain Regional Office in Denver, leading a program staff that supported over 90 national park sites and provided technical assistance on a variety of operational issues, including law enforcement, emergency response, wildland and structural fire, and a comprehensive fee program. He has served on multiple incident management teams and is currently a liaison officer with the Southern Area Type 1 Red Team, which manages wildland fire, natural disaster relief efforts and other incident management activities.

Lee has held management positions at Natchez Trace Parkway and Gulf Islands National Seashore, and has completed temporary assignments as acting superintendent of Big Cypress National Preserve, Canaveral National Seashore, and, most recently, Blue Ridge Parkway.

Both Lee and his wife, Stephanie, look forward to relocating to Asheville, North Carolina. They have two daughters residing in Naples, Florida, and a son in the United States Coast Guard.

[Blue Ridge Parkway news release.](#)

Reports and Releases

A summary of recent news stories, web postings and agency press releases pertaining to the department, the Service, public lands and the environment.

Administration

Review of Trump Administration's Infrastructure Legislative Outline – NPCA staff who have analyzed the administration's infrastructure legislative proposal, as laid out in a recent [Washington Post article](#), have found that it "aims to accelerate infrastructure projects, at the cost of clean water, clear air, expertise of federal agency staff, judicial review, [and] longstanding bedrock environmental laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)." The detailed document is divided into two sections – one regarding ways in which it will dismantle the NEPA process, the other on ways in which it will dismantle federal laws and constrain judicial review. It lists about 20 ways in which NEPA will be undercut and the many ways in which the following acts will be weakened – Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Rivers and Harbors Act, Marine Mammals Protection Act, Endangered Species Act, Magnuson Stevens Act, NPS Organic Act, FHA's DOT Act 4(f), the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and National Historic Preservation Act. The full itemized listing can be found on [NPCA's policy update webpage](#). Source: NPCA.

National Park System

Offshore Drilling's Potential Impacts On Coastal Parks – Elizabeth Miller has written an article for *Backpacker* magazine on "what new offshore drilling means for national parks." She begins by recapping the massive impacts that the Deepwater Horizon had on Gulf Islands National Seashore, then turns to the potential disasters that could be caused by DOI's plans to open a total of 98% of the outer continental shelf to oil and gas development. The plan "has coastal parks and recreation areas nationwide asking if they could be next." Coalition member Mike Murray, who worked at Cape Cod, Everglades and Cape Hatteras during his 34-year career, is quoted on the plan: "It's massive in scale, and in that regard it's unprecedented. It just seems like it's a broad, massive proposal that's not been well thought-out." Mike points out that by his calculation there are 67 coastal park system areas within range of the proposed leases, as well as 10,000 miles of shoreline and two million acres of marine waters. The article includes assessments of potential impacts and assurances by DOI's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. Comments on the proposal can be made through the Regulations.gov web portal. Navigate to <http://www.regulations.gov> and under the search tab, in the space provided, type in Docket ID: BOEM-2017-0074 to submit comments and to view other comments already submitted. Sources: [Backpacker magazine](#), Congressman Jimmy Panetta [webpage](#).

New Take On Infrastructure Decline In National Parks – On January 29th, the U.S. edition of the English newspaper, *The Guardian*, announced "a major expansion of 'This Land is Your Land,' our series investigating the threats facing America's public lands." The first article in this series followed; it reports on maintenance issues in the national parks. Source: [The Guardian](#).

Death Valley's Devils Hole Shaken By Alaska Quake – The powerful magnitude 7.9 earthquake that struck off Alaska on January 23rd was felt more than 2,000 miles away, where it stirred up a water-filled cave in the park that is home to the critically endangered Devils Hole pupfish. Although it created a tsunami of only eight inches, Devils Hole had waves of more than a foot. All the pupfish survived. Source: [Las Vegas Sun](#).

Acadia National Park Harvesting Bill Challenged – Mary Foley, a former regional chief scientist for the Service, and Mike Soukup, a former associate director, have an article in the January 22nd edition of the *Bangor Daily News* concerning a bill that would open Acadia's natural resources to some types of harvesting. The bill, H.R. 4266, would allow commercial harvesting of clams and worms in the park. “[The bill] is being touted as a victory for the ‘little guy’ against an oppressive bureaucracy,” they write. “Indeed, few have opposed it, though it weakens the park's role as a haven for species widely and intensively exploited elsewhere and important in the intertidal food chain...[It] regrettably responds to emotional ‘traditional use’ arguments, in this case for commercial harvesting, that are poised to win over common-sense conservation as we face new threats. National parks and their resources belong to all of us as citizens. Changing the mandate of a 100-year-old law is not a victory except for a few, including those whose agenda is to unravel protection of federal lands across the nation. This bill is a dangerous precedent and should be opposed by all those who value leaving special places intact for now and for the future.” Source: [Bangor Daily News](#).

Ask A Ranger – Dr. Tyler Nordgren, a self-professed “artist-astronomer/night sky ambassador,” has a new poster worth checking out (you may remember Nordgren from his past posters for tourism to imaginary parks on the solar system's planets and moons, which were done in the style of the great 1930s WPA national park posters). This one, done in shades of grey, green and brown, shows a ranger holding a park pamphlet that says “Climate Change and the Parks” on it. The caption above her says “I Care For America;” the caption below her continues that observation by adding “With sound science, accurate interpretation, and respect for nature. Because I'm a park ranger.” Here's the [link to the web page](#) depicting the poster.

Sundry Actions and Updates – Here, briefly, are activities recently reported by parks, culled from park press releases. In each case, additional details can be found in those releases:

- *Death Valley NP* – The park will be undertaking some road maintenance projects this spring. The projects will allow the park to research the acoustic impacts of various pavement surfaces as well as extend the life of the pavement. Construction work is scheduled from January 30th through May 26th. [News release](#).
- *Natchez Trace Parkway* – Partial closures are in effect for equestrian use of the Yockanookany section of the Natchez Trace National Scenic Trail. The trail is unmaintained from the Highway 43 trailhead to the northern trail terminus and is closed to equestrian use but remains open to hiking. The park is replacing trail bridges and otherwise upgrading the trail, a project that will take several years to complete. [News release](#).

Public Lands

BLM Or Bundy? – During a trip to the Las Vegas area that featured his active participation in a land cleanup project outside the city, Secretary Zinke responded to several questions from reporters about current land management issues. His answer to one of them left some people wondering whether he stood with BLM or Cliven Bundy in the ongoing court case involving the latter: “When asked about Bundy and cattle grazing in places like Gold Butte National Monument in northeastern Clark County, he said only that there are ranchers with claims going back to the mid-1800s and ‘the federal government should not be adversarial.’” No further clarification of what he meant by the term ‘adversarial’ was offered. Source: [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#).

The Environment

President Offers His Perspective On Climate Change On British TV – The *Washington Post*'s Philip Bump reported Monday on President Trump's interview with Piers Morgan last week on Britain's ITV News – primarily on the president's observations about climate change. That exchange follows:

MORGAN: Do you believe in climate change? Do you believe it exists?

TRUMP: There is a cooling, and there is a heating, and I mean, look — it used to not be climate change. It used to be global warming. Right?

MORGAN: Right.

TRUMP: That wasn't working too well, because it was getting too cold all over the place. The ice caps were going to melt, they were going to be gone by now, but now they're setting records, so okay, they're at a record level. There were so many things happening, Piers. I'll tell you what I believe in. I believe in clear air. I believe in crystal clear beautiful water. I believe in just having good cleanliness in all.

Says Bump: "Here are the assertions Trump makes either explicitly or implicitly in that exchange: 1) The world is not warming at an unusual rate. 2) Climate change is now called that because 'global warming didn't work as a term since it was 'getting too cold all over the place.' 3) This is evidenced by the fact that the ice caps are 'setting records' in their extent. All of those things are incorrect." The article then presents the actual facts on each of these points. Source: [Washington Post](#).

Notices

This section has been created to capture short notes from members on subjects relevant to the Service, the Coalition, alumni affairs and so forth. Send submissions to BHalainen@gmail.com.

- **Hotshot Association Founded** – The newly-formed U.S. Hotshots Association is an organization that's been created "to support, promote, protect and preserve all hotshot crews and hotshot crewmembers, whether current, former, or future." According to its webpage, it "has also formed with an intent to directly influence innovation and advancement across the major quarters of wildland fire culture, policy, and operations: safety, leadership, suppression and management." The webpage (<https://www.usshots.com/>) has details on how to join.

Acknowledgements

This newsletter comes to you through the efforts of a number of people. First are our "regulars":

- Producer: Steve Pittleman
- Congressional Correspondent: Don Hellmann
- At Large Correspondent: Dennis Burnett

Thanks also to the following people who also sent along stories or tips for this issue:

- Dick Martin
- Duncan Morrow
- Joan Anzelmo
- Mike Murray
- Terry Allen

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

"Scenic and historic places and objects teach patriotism and nourish moral sentiments, while they care also in some measure for the aesthetic nature. [Once] established, these famous places become unsalaried teachers. They never die, never ask to be retired on pensions, and their voices grow stronger and more convincing with increased age."

Reverend Henry MacCracken, from *Quotable Quotes: Relating to Conservation in General and the National Parks in Particular*, Department of Interior, 1951

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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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