



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

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### Incidents

#### **National Park System Shutdown Leads To Unprecedented Problems In Many Parks**

As of this writing (late Tuesday), the partial federal government shutdown, now 19 days old, remains in effect and is within three days of eclipsing the previous record length for such a closure (see the note at the end of the story for more info). Its impacts on National Park Service operations to date have been extensive, various and often substantial.

Below are a few of the many, many articles that have appeared in the media on the effects that the shutdown has had on the parks. Since several report on more than one park, they're listed by source rather than by area, with park names highlighted. Efforts have been made to avoid duplication insofar as is possible; a second reference to an area usually indicates more information about the park.

Several fatalities have also occurred in the parks since the closure began. Although many articles are linking these to understaffing, there's no evident direct correlation. They are therefore being treated separately following this summary:

- *Washington Post* – An article in last Tuesday's *Post* began with an overview of the situation: "The government shutdown has left America's national parks largely unsupervised. No one is at the gate. No one is collecting a fee. The visitor centers are closed. There are some law enforcement and emergency personnel on site, but certainly nothing as standard as a park ranger who can answer a question. People are streaming into the parks, enjoying the free access, but they're finding trash cans overflowing and restrooms locked. Vault toilets are not serviced, and there's hardly a flush toilet to be found anywhere. If nature calls — well, the woods are over that way." The article includes references to volunteers collecting garbage, cleaning bathrooms and generally keeping an eye on **Joshua Tree NP**; closure of an access road at **C&O Canal NHP** that has caused hundreds of visitors to park on nearby neighborhood streets; and the loss of business to communities on both sides of the Rio Grande in **Big Bend NP**. Source: [Washington Post](#).
- *USA Today* – The newspaper ran a similar overview on January 3rd that quotes Coalition chair Phil Francis on the situation. "Visitors are still coming, and that need is still there," he says regarding the need to have parks managed by furloughed staff. "People who are called non-essential still provide essential services. When you have a rescue in the backcountry, it's not just the rangers who are working." Along with other parks cited in this summary, the article talks about the many organizations working to keep parks open – Friend of Vicksburg National Military Park donating funds for essential services at the **Vicksburg NMP**; New York state

providing funds to operate **Statue of Liberty NM**; Concessioner Guest Services, Inc. providing portable toilets at several locations around the **National Mall** in Washington; Florida National Parks Association funding **Big Cypress NP, Biscayne NP, Dry Tortugas NP** and **Everglades NP**; and others. Phil gets the last word in the story – he calls on the administration to close all parks because of reports of "damage to our irreplaceable resources..." adding that "President Trump took responsibility for creating this mess and it will be National Park Service employees cleaning it up when they get back to work." Source: [USA Today](#).

- *Arizona Central* – On December 24th, hundreds of unauthorized visitors climbed a dune-covered fence to gain access to **White Sands NM**, officially off limits because of the shutdown. Numerous cars were seen parked along the perimeter of the monument where the dunes come closest to the road near the visitor center. Although fencing separates the monument from the highway, families could be seen on the other side of the fence playing on the dunes, taking selfies and riding sleds. Source: [Arizona Central](#).
- *Fortune* – The magazine offers a general overview of the problems that the shutdown is causing, with reference to the problems noted above at **Joshua Tree NP**, the trash and human waste piling up in **Yosemite NP** due to overused restrooms with few employees to maintain them, and the state of Utah paying to keep five national parks there open. It quotes a resident of Yosemite on the situation there: "It's so heartbreaking. There is more trash and human waste and disregard for the rules than I've seen in my four years living here." Source: [Fortune](#).
- *Philadelphia Inquirer* – "With rakes, brooms, and trash pickers in hand, more than a dozen young Muslim men took to Independence Mall [at **Independence NHP**] on Saturday in the rain to clean up litter," reported the paper on January 5th. "It was their way of lessening the impact of the partial government shutdown, they said. Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell, the Mall's most famous occupants, have been closed to the public for the majority of the time since the shutdown began Dec. 22. That hasn't stopped passersby -- including tourists catching a glimpse of the Liberty Bell from outside its windowed housing -- from leaving their cigarette butts, gum wrappers, and other items of trash behind, or the wind, for that matter, from blowing some of the city's discards there. 'We just came out here because we thought it's our responsibility as a Muslim community to help the neighborhood and help the community,' Zubair Abaidullah, 17, said as he scooped up wet cigarette butts, plastic bags, and other litter." Source: [Philadelphia Inquirer](#).
- *Sacramento Bee* – The paper reports that **Yosemite NP** has closed the Wawona and Hodgson Meadows campgrounds and the Mariposa Grove of redwoods after finding human feces and urine beside Wawona Road. Also noted: Parts of **Sequoia and Kings Canyon NPs** have been closed due to overflowing trash and traffic jams; **Pinnacles NP** has closed its eastern gate because of trash and heavy traffic; and **Arches and Canyonlands NPs** have been closed because there's nobody to clear snow-covered roads. Source: [Sacramento Bee](#).
- *CNN* – On December 24th, hiker Josh Snider fell and broke his leg in Santa Elena Canyon in **Big Bend NP**. He and his companion were trying to figure out how to get out of the canyon when a family of four came by. When one of them called the park's emergency services number to seek help, the operator advised that she'd call for a ranger, but that few were available due to the shutdown so they should try to manage by themselves. Snider's friend, members of the family and another hiker started carrying him to the trailhead and were joined en route by a ranger who helped by carrying Snider on his back. He was taken to Big Bend Medical Center, where he was diagnosed with a fractured fibula and a torn ligament in his ankle. Snider said that he appreciated how everyone came together to help him out of the canyon, but added that he wishes the government would resolve the shutdown to avoid similar mishaps. Source: [CNN](#).
- *KOMO News* – The Washington station reported on the closure of **Mount Rainier NP** on Monday: "The effects of the partial government shutdown have reached Mt. Rainier, where rangers have officially closed down all vehicle access to the national park. The gates closed at 3 p.m. Sunday and now all vehicle traffic is prohibited until further notice. Snow was expected in

the park Sunday night into Monday, and crews were no longer available to plow the access roads. The National Park Inn, restaurant and gift shop also closed Sunday afternoon, meaning there are no longer any public services, including food or restroom access in the park. Officials are strongly recommending against anyone trying to access the park on foot.” Source: [KOMO News](#).

- *The Oregonian* – Although **Crater Lake NP** remains open, visitors will now need to hike a long way in, as the south entrance has been closed due to a buildup of human waste in the park, which the paper calls “a disturbingly common problem at national park sites” since park employees got sent home when the shutdown began. “Due to conditions caused by the impact of human waste buildup on the park’s water system,” read a note on the park’s website, “the road to Crater Lake is now closed to vehicles at Highway 62 to protect public health and park resources. The road may not reopen until after the shutdown.” The northern entrance road was closed earlier in the season. Source: [The Oregonian](#).
- *Marin Independent Journal* – **Muir Woods NM** closed this past Monday “in order to maintain staff focus on health and safety operations in the park during the government shutdown.” Parking, bathroom and visitor services are unavailable. The Siren Canteen at Stinson Beach in **Golden Gate NRA** will remain open for its off-season days of Friday through Mondays during the shutdown, as the restaurant’s owner is making a donation to the park service to have a ranger on location as well as to maintain maintenance and garbage services. An agreement between the park service and Alcatraz Cruises will continue “day only” tour services to **Alcatraz Island**, also in Golden Gate NRA. Source: [Marin Independent Journal](#).
- *National Public Radio* – Local businesses are pitching in to pay staff at **Yellowstone NP** to keep parts of the park open during the shutdown: “[Private] businesses that operate inside the park are picking up the tab – about \$7,500 dollars a day – to groom Yellowstone's 300-plus miles of snow-covered roads and to keep one paved road open to cars. Xanterra Parks and Resorts, which runs the only hotels operating inside the park in winter, is paying most of that — paying park service employees to perform the same grooming duties they due under normal circumstances. Xanterra asked the 13 guide services that operate in the park to chip in to help pay, and all of them did. It adds up to about 300 bucks a day for each of the guide services.” Source: [National Public Radio](#).
- *KXLF News* – Although entrance fees are not being collected and the VC at **Grand Canyon NP** is closed, the park at least hasn’t suffered from trash and toilet problems like many other areas. That’s because Arizona Governor Doug Ducey issued an executive order last year allowing trash pickup and restroom maintenance to continue during a shutdown. Those services are being paid by funds contributed by the state. Source: [KXLF News](#).
- *Common Dreams* – This one will warm your heart. GSA has found the funding to reopen the **Old Post Office Tower** in Washington, D.C., a unit of the **National Mall** that shares a building with Trump International Hotel. “The Trump administration is using your tax dollars to keep an NPS site at his luxury hotel open while the rest of Americans are wading through garbage and locked gates,” wrote Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-NJ) on Twitter. “The corruption and disgrace of this government are without bottom.” Source: [Common Dreams](#).

A closing note: It may interest you to know that this is the sixth significant government shutdown since 1990, with “significant” defined as a shutdown that leads to actual employee furloughs. Here a list of them in chronological order:

- October 6 – October 8, 1990
- November 14 – November 19, 1995
- December 16, 1995 – January 6, 1996
- October 1 – October 17, 2013
- January 20 – January 23, 2018
- December 22, 2018 – present

For more on the history of federal government shutdowns, go to [this Wikipedia page](#).

### **Great Smoky Mountains NP Visitor Killed By Falling Tree**

A mother of three was killed by a falling tree while hiking in the park on Thursday, December 27th.

Laila Jiwani, 46, of Plano, Texas, died after part of a tree fell due to high winds and struck her. The accident occurred on the Porter Creek Trail.

Jiwani was hiking with her husband and three sons. One of the boys, a six-year-old, was also injured by the tree, which broke his leg in two places and caused superficial head injuries. He was airlifted to the UT Medical Center with non-life threatening injuries.

Source: [Knoxville News Sentinel](#).

### **Yosemite NP Man Dies After Fall Into Merced River**

A man died after suffering a head injury above Nevada Fall on Christmas Day. His body was retrieved from the water in the Silver Apron area – a large, sloping granite area that the Merced River flows over that's located between Vernal Fall and Nevada Fall just east of Yosemite Valley.

After receiving a 911 call, rangers were on scene in less than an hour and the man was removed from the water. Medical attention was provided, but he died from his injuries.

Source: [Sacramento Bee](#).

### **Glen Canyon NRA Teenage Girl Falls To Death From Horseshoe Bend Overlook**

A 14-year-old California girl fell 700 feet to her death from the overlook on December 24th.

The girl's family reported her missing on Christmas Eve and her body was spotted later that day by an Arizona Department of Public Safety helicopter. Her body was retrieved on Christmas Day.

It's believed that the girl accidentally fell from the scenic overlook, which offers view of the Colorado River flowing below red cliffs near the Arizona-Utah border. The area is only accessible by foot and there are no barriers.

Source: [New York Post](#).

### **Sagamore Hill NHS Fire Damages Park Visitor Center**

A fire started in the boiler room of the park's visitor center on the morning of December 24th. The boiler room was heavily damaged.

Fire companies from five towns responded. Firefighters gained access to the building by cutting through the roof.

The center was closed at the time. No injuries were reported.

Source: [News 12 Long Island](#).

### **President's Park Man Caught Climbing National Christmas Tree**

On the night of December 21st, Secret Service and Park Police officers responded to the park, which is located on the north side of the Ellipse, after a man began climbing the National Christmas Tree at around 5:45 p.m.

The man made it between 15 and 20 feet off the ground prior to coming down on his own accord. Two negotiators convinced him to leave the tree at about 7 p.m. He was subsequently taken to a hospital for evaluation.

Source: [Washington Times](#).

## **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 Former Secretary Zinke Issues Farewell Message**

Although few could read it because of the shutdown, Secretary Zinke sent out a farewell message to all DOI employees on the evening of Wednesday, January 2nd. The full text follows.

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Dear Interior Team:

It has been one of the great honors of my life to serve as your Secretary. First of all, I thank the President for this amazing opportunity.

When I took office here, one thing became immediately clear: Interior has a fantastic team. I am so proud of the great work we have done together over my time as Secretary. When I was a Boy Scout, I was taught to leave the campsite better than I found it. I am confident that over the last 2 years, we have done that together for our public lands and the Department of the Interior (Interior). America's public lands are "For the Benefit and Enjoyment of the People," as it says on the Roosevelt Arch in Yellowstone National Park. That passion for public access is the ethic I brought to this job.

Our stellar record on conservation – from the million-plus acres we opened for hunting and fishing, to the historic commitment we made to investing in our public lands infrastructure as part of the President's last budget proposal – stands as a testament to our enduring and shared love of the great American outdoors. Increased public access established protected wildlife corridors and restored the American conservation ethic to best sciences and best practices for the greater good and the longest term.

In less than 2 years, Interior has led the revitalization of America's domestic energy production, reclaiming our position as the world's largest energy producer. Our recent Bureau of Land Management lease sale in New Mexico brought in almost \$1 billion, shattering records. For the second year in a row, our energy revenue disbursements to States and Indian Tribes grew substantially. Our regulatory relief efforts saved over \$6 billion, making us a leader in the Administration in regulatory reform. We put our all-of-the-above energy policy into action, conducting the highest-grossing lease sale for wind development in American history. Never again shall we be held hostage by foreign entities for our energy needs.

In addition, there is no higher priority than keeping America safe. Our joint law enforcement task force on opioids has had tremendous success. We are beginning to more actively manage our forests. We also worked hard to reopen Interior sites and rebuild alongside communities after various natural disasters.

Here at Interior, we took action on the widespread harassment problem that our Administration inherited, and we began a transformative Department reorganization that will streamline our processes and improve Interior's operations.

Now, it is time to move on. I am stepping down today, January 2, 2019. Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt will take over as the Acting Secretary of the Interior. I have full confidence in Deputy Secretary Bernhardt and I trust that the transition will be seamless.

Finally, I thank each and every one of you, the great public servants at the Department of the Interior, for your hard work; your dedication to the mission; your unwavering patriotism; and your love of public lands. [Bravo Zulu](#) to you all.

May God Bless America and all those who serve her!

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

### **National Park Service Acting Director Releases Statement On Shutdown**

Deputy Director P. Daniel Smith, currently serving as acting director, released a media statement on January 6th entitled "Statement on Protecting National Parks while Providing the American People Continued Access during the Lapse of Appropriations." The full text follows.

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During the lapse of appropriations, the men and women of the National Park Service who have remained on duty have gone to incredible lengths to keep America's iconic national parks as accessible as possible to the American public. Thanks to the strong relationships that many national parks have built with partners across the country, a number of states, private concession companies, and park nonprofit groups have stepped up to provide over two million dollars' worth of donations and in-kind services to help over forty parks continue to provide key services for visitors.

As the lapse in appropriations continues, it has become clear that highly visited parks with limited staff have urgent needs that cannot be addressed solely through the generosity of our partners.

Over the last few days the Acting Secretary of the Department of the Interior David Bernhardt and the National Park Service (NPS) have explored a number of options to address the maintenance and sanitation issues that have arisen at a number of highly visited parks while keeping our commitment to the American public to ensure they have access to their lands.

The NPS currently has funds derived from entrance, camping, parking and other fees collected from park visitors that would typically be used for future projects at parks. After consultation with the Office of the Solicitor at the Department of the Interior, it has been determined that these funds can and should be used to provide immediate assistance and services to highly visited parks during the lapse in appropriations.

We are taking this extraordinary step to ensure that parks are protected, and that visitors can continue to access parks with limited basic services.

In the coming days the NPS will begin to use these funds to clean up trash that has built up at numerous parks, clean and maintain restrooms, bring additional law enforcement rangers into parks to patrol accessible areas, and to restore accessibility to areas that would typically be accessible this time of year. While the NPS will not be able to fully open parks, and many of the smaller sites around the country will remain closed, utilizing these funds now will allow the American public to safely visit many of our nation's national parks while providing these iconic treasures the protection they deserve.

Visitors should go to [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov) and select "Find a Park" for additional information on access to parks and sites in a particular area.



## **Congress**

### **Weekly Legislative Roundup**

#### ***New Public Laws***

On December 17th, the president signed into law H.R. 1417, to amend the National Law Enforcement Museum Act to allow the Museum to acquire, receive, possess, collect, ship, transport, import, and display firearms. (Public Law 115–321).

#### ***Senate***

On December 19th, the Senate amended and passed H.R. 695, making further continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2019. This bill funds a number of federal agencies, including the Department of the Interior, through February 8, 2019. The bill now goes back to the House to approve the Senate amendment.

On December 20th, the Senate passed H.R. 6287, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to award grants, through a competitive process, to tax-exempt, nonprofit organizations for the operation and maintenance of memorials located within the United States established to commemorate the events of, and honor the victims of, the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, and the Pentagon, on September 11, 2001, at the site of the attacks. The bill is drafted in such a way that the funding will most likely go to the 9/11 Memorial Foundation in New York; it could provide up to \$25 million per year for the next five fiscal years of the foundation's \$72.4 million annual budget. The \$25 million per year authorized for these grants is larger than all but a handful of the budgets for the individual national park units. As amended by the Senate, the bill removed the 9/11 National Memorial in Pennsylvania from eligibility for the funding. The funding would likely come out of the NPS budget even though the foundation managing the memorial made it clear that it wanted NPS to have nothing to do with managing the memorial when it first opened and subsequently as the legislation was being drafted. The bill now goes back to the House to approve the Senate amendment.

On December 22nd, the Senate passed H.R. 6602, to reauthorize National Park Service participation in the management of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route through 2025. The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law.

On January 2nd, in its last action of the 115th Congress, the Senate approved a number of pending nominations for various federal agencies. However, the nomination of Raymond David Vela of Texas to be director of the National Park Service was not among those approved. Similar to the end of previous Congresses, nominations not approved by the Senate by the end of the 115th Congress will be returned to the White House, which will have to resubmit them in the 116th Congress. The National Park Service has now been without a director for over two years, the longest period in Park Service history and well beyond the 10 months the service was without a director in 2009 when the nomination of Jon Jarvis was being considered by the Senate. The requirement to have the director to be confirmed by the Senate has only been in law since 1996.

The Senate ended the 115th Congress at 11:52 a.m. on January 3rd, eight minutes prior to the convening of the 116th Congress at noon on January 3rd, as required by the 20th Amendment to the Constitution.

#### ***House***

On December 20th, the House passed:

- H.R. 6602, to reauthorize National Park Service participation in the management of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route through 2025.
- H.R. 695, making further continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2019. This bill funds a number of federal agencies, including the Department of the Interior, through February 8, 2019. The House made further amendments to the bill to include the \$5 billion to build a

boarder wall that the president requested as well as money for disaster assistance. The bill passed by a vote of 217 yeas to 185 nays. The bill now returns to the Senate for further action.

On December 20th, the Committee on Financial Services held a hearing entitled "The Peril of an Ignored National Debt". No witnesses from any federal agency testified at the hearing.

On December 21st, the House agreed to the Senate amendment to H.R. 6287, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to award grants, through a competitive process, to tax-exempt, nonprofit organizations for the operation and maintenance of memorials located within the United States established to commemorate the events of, and honor the victims of, the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, and the Pentagon, on September 11, 2001, at the site of the attacks. (See Senate action for December 20th, above, for a further description of the bill). The bill passed by a vote of 371 yeas to 3 nays and it now goes to the president to be signed into law.

The House ended the 115th Congress at 11:56 a.m. on January 3rd, four minutes prior to the convening of the 116th Congress at noon on January 3rd, as required by the 20th Amendment to the Constitution.

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

## **Park People, Park Friends**

### **NPS Alumni Passing Of Tom Hobbs**

Thomas O. Hobbs, 79, passed away peacefully at home in Candler, North Carolina, due to heart failure on July 26, 2018.

Tom was born in Fairmont, West Virginia. He began his NPS career in 1961 after graduating from Fairmont State College and University in Kentucky. He worked as a seasonal ranger at Mammoth Cave NP and as a temporary ranger at Appomattox Courthouse NHP; his first permanent assignment was Mesa Verde NP as a ranger.

From there, Tom went on to serve as the chief ranger at Kennesaw Mountain NHP. While there, he represented Rotary International in Denmark for eight weeks sponsored by Rotarian Vincent Ellis, superintendent of Kennesaw Mountain NHP. During his time there, he represented the National Park Service with talks and seminars at universities and Rotary meetings. He later became a member of the Rotary Club in Bar Harbor, Maine.

After attending the two-year mid-level management training course in Washington, DC, he served as chief of park operations at Acadia NP, superintendent of Bryce Canyon NP, chief ranger of Yellowstone NP, superintendent of Isle Royale NP, and superintendent of C&O Canal NHP, where he retired in 1994. Tom loved and was dedicated to preserving the national parks. He received several distinguished awards during his 33 years of service.

Upon retirement, he enjoyed tour guiding in Acadia National Park; boating, fishing, and hiking; and traveling to European countries, Canada, the Caribbean, and USA sites. He later moved to the mountains of North Carolina, where he was an active church and community volunteer. Hiking and visiting North Carolina waterfalls and driving on the Blue Ridge Parkway were his joys in recent years.

Tom is survived by his wife of 57 years, Alice; four sons, Gregory (Cathy), Thomas O., Jr., (Robin) Lowell (Anne), and Larry; seven grandchildren; and two sisters and a brother.

Memorial donations can be made in Tom's memory to Montmorenci United Methodist Church, PO Box 610, Candler, NC 28715, attention of the McFall Family.

Source: Alice Hobbs.



## **NPS Alumni**

### **Passing Of Tommy Thompson**

Career NPS ranger Harold "Tommy" Thompson, 84, died on the morning of January 3rd from complications stemming from pulmonary fibrosis. He'd been in hospice care for several weeks in Green Valley, Arizona, where he and Cricket lived.

Tommy retired as the regional chief ranger for Midwest Region, where he served for about two decades. Before that, he worked as a field ranger and chief ranger at Bryce Canyon, Death Valley and several other national parks.

It was Tommy and Cricket's decision to not have a memorial service. Condolences can be sent to Cricket Thompson at 1281 W. Placita Quieta, Green Valley, AZ 85622.

Source: Members Butch Farabee and John Townsend.

## **NPS Alumni**

### **Passing Of John Fiedor**

John Fiedor, 66, of Dayville, Oregon, passed away on Monday, December 24th.

John worked in many parks in National Capital Region and at Gettysburg NMP, then retired as chief of interpretation at John Day Fossil Beds NM.

A memorial service was held on January 6th at the Dayville Memorial Church in Dayville, Oregon.

Source: Mark Fiedor, via Facebook.

## **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 and Government**

**Trump Orders Pay Freeze For Federal Workers** – The president added insult to injury on December 28th by ordering a freeze on scheduled pay increases for federal workers – many of whom aren't even being paid at present. "Trump's order was expected because he has advocated for a freeze all year," reports the *Washington Post*. "Due to Congress not making a decision regarding a raise, the move was made to prevent a pay increase from taking effect by default. The order comes as some 800,000 federal employees, out of a workforce of 2.1 million, are in unpaid status due to the partial government shutdown...Of those, about 380,000 have been furloughed, while the rest are still on the job without pay." Source: [Washington Post](#).

**Trump Says Federal Employees Support Shutdown** – The president believes that federal employees are in support of a border wall and want the White House to hold out during the shutdown to ensure wall funding, reports the *Federal Times*. Speaking to reporters on Christmas Day, Trump offered these comments: "Well, I think they [federal employees] understand what's happening. They want border security. The people of this country want border security. It's not a question of me. I'd rather not be doing shutdowns." Moreover, many federal employees have "said to me and communicated, 'Stay out until you get the funding for the wall.' These federal workers want the wall. The only one that doesn't want the wall are the Democrats, because they don't mind open borders." Source: [Federal Times](#).

### **Department of the Interior**

**The Adventures Of Ryan Zinke: The Sequel** – Secretary Zinke may have left town, but the town is not quite through with him. On January 3rd, the *Washington Post* reported that “the Justice Department’s public integrity section is examining whether newly departed Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke lied to his agency’s inspector general investigators, according to three people familiar with the matter, a potential criminal violation that would exacerbate Zinke’s legal woes.” The article elaborates on the reason for the DOJ investigation. Zinke has been dealing with inspector general inquiries pertaining to his real estate dealings in his home state of Montana and his involvement in reviewing a proposed casino project by Native American tribes in Connecticut. “In the course of that work,” says the *Post*, “inspector general investigators came to believe Zinke had lied to them, and they referred the matter to the Justice Department to consider whether any laws were violated, the people familiar with the matter said.” Source: [Washington Post](#).

**Broadcast Reports On Administration Suppression Of Science** – Reveal, an audio publication of the Center for Investigative Reporting, broadcast an episode entitled “Silencing Science” in early January that focuses on DOI’s editing of NPS scientist Maria Caffrey’s report on the impacts of climate change on the national parks. The report was revised to remove any suggestion that such changes might be human-caused – part of a pattern of suppression of scientific findings found across federal agencies. The website containing [a link to the broadcast](#) has this introductory paragraph: “President Donald Trump says he doubts humans have much of a role in climate change. His administration has downplayed the science of climate change and sought to silence scientists working for the federal government. In this hour, Reveal’s Elizabeth Shogren details the pressures one researcher faced as she worked on a project for the National Park Service.” Source: [Reveal](#).

## **National Park Service and System**

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

**NPS Leads Efforts To Protect Diminishing Dark Skies** – The December edition of *Mother Jones*, a magazine dedicated to “nonprofit independent journalism,” has a story with this headline: “Light Pollution Has Made Stargazing Impossible In Most Places – But Not In National Parks.” In 2017, a multinational research team found that the Earth had gotten brighter – that is, that light pollution had increased – at a rate of about two percent each year between 2012 and 2016 and that fewer and fewer people had ever seen a truly dark night sky. “To raise awareness about light pollution and create support for conserving natural darkness,” reports the magazine, “public land managers are relying on the growing popularity of astronomy tourism—or ‘astrotourism’ for short. Astrotourism, a term once used to describe tourism in space that now encompasses night sky viewing, is on the rise. The International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) reports that the number of worldwide parks applying to be on the list of certified “International Dark Sky Places” is five times higher than it was eight years ago—with 15 to 20 parks applying for the certification per year now versus just three or four in 2010 and 2011...As stewards of some of the wildest natural areas remaining in the country, the US National Park Service has taken a leading role in promoting the value of the night skies.” The article then provides details on the Service’s efforts. Source: [Mother Jones](#).

**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.

- *Cape Hatteras NS* – The park continues to collect interesting odds and ends gifted to it by the sea – first a piece of a rocket, then a military mine, now a 40-year-old Doritos bag. The park [posted a photo of the bag on its Facebook page](#) on December 18th with this comment: “The bag design looked odd to us, but we couldn’t put our finger on why until we noticed the date in the lower corner — 1979! While this was sort of a neat find due to its age, it serves as a reminder that plastic trash lasts a long time, in this case almost 40 years!” Source: [The Charlotte Observer](#).
- *Fort Monroe NM* – Huntington Ingalls Industries’ Newport News Shipbuilding Division has awarded its first-ever One Community Transformational Grant to the Fort Monroe Foundation. The \$300,000 grant, which highlights Newport News’ commitment to diversity and inclusion in

the community, will provide funding over the next three years for the creation of the National Center for Freedom, a new public resource to explore the historic struggles for freedom. The center is being developed by the Fort Monroe Authority and the National Park Service in partnership with many civic, cultural and educational entities. Source: [Nasdaq.com](http://Nasdaq.com).

- *Jewel Cave NM* – “Six volunteer cavers were greeted like returning astronauts Monday night after they emerged from mapping the 200th mile of Jewel Cave and reported the discovery of a stalagmite that could be the cave’s largest,” reported the Rapid City Journal on Wednesday, December 19th. “About 50 people were on hand at Jewel Cave National Monument for a potluck and a celebration of the mapping milestone. The greeting party included 94-year-old Jan Conn, who pioneered the exploration and mapping of the cave with her late husband, Herb, during a 22-year period beginning in 1959.” Source: [Rapid City Journal](http://Rapid City Journal).
- *Katahdin Woods and Waters NM* – The National Park Service has contracted with the Appalachian Mountain Club of Maine to build a series of hiking trails in the new park. Up until now, development in the park has been primarily limited to the main loop road, a 16-mile dirt road that leads to access points and starts of trails to scenic views. With the AMC trail additions, each trail will be one to two miles from that road. AMC’s trail crew started work in October and will continue work through fall 2019. Source: [Natural Resources Council of Maine](http://Natural Resources Council of Maine).

**New Area And Re-Designation Proposals** – At any given time, there are proposals in the works for new areas or changes in designation for current NPS units. Here are the latest:

- *Indiana Dunes NL* – Rep. Pete Visclosky (D-IN) says that he will continue his efforts to get Indiana Dunes designated as a national park in the new Congress. The House approved proposal failed to advance from a Senate subcommittee and expired January 3rd when the two-year term of the 115th Congress ended. Source: [Chicago Tribune](http://Chicago Tribune).
- *Illinois Race Riot Site* – Rep. Rodney Davis (R-IL) has introduced a measure in Congress to designate the site of 1908 race riots in Springfield as a “national historic monument.” A white mob destroyed black-owned businesses and homes in Springfield during the riots. Two black men were lynched. The events prompted civil rights activists in New York to hold meetings, leading to the formation of the NAACP. The Service has agreed to do a preliminary assessment. Source: [Miami Herald](http://Miami Herald).

## Climate and Conservation

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

## National and Worldwide Issues

**Studies Reveal Dramatically Crashing Insect Populations** – A long article entitled “The Insect Apocalypse Is Here,” written by Brooke Jervis, appeared in the *New York Times Magazine* on November 27th. It concerns the dramatic drop in the populations of a number of insect populations worldwide. Two local examples: “In the United States, scientists recently found the population of monarch butterflies fell by 90 percent in the last 20 years, a loss of 900 million individuals; the rusty-patched bumblebee, which once lived in 28 states, dropped by 87 percent over the same period.” The causes are the same as for other species – climate change, the overall degradation of global habitat, herbicides and pesticides, loss of habitat to “the relentless expansion of human spaces.” Jervis examines a pivotal study recently conducted at 63 European nature preserves, representing almost 17,000 sampling days, that really got the attention of entomologists: “The numbers were stark, indicating a vast impoverishment of an entire insect universe, even in protected areas where insects ought to be under less stress. The speed and scale of the drop were shocking even to entomologists...” She says that we face a problem with species extinction worldwide, but also face a less visible dramatic decline in those that remain – an issue just as critical: “What we’re losing is not just the *diversity* part of biodiversity, but the *bio* part: life in sheer quantity...” Jervis provides more compelling data and some ideas on how

to ameliorate the problem before it gets out of control. She also cites a biologist regarding another report showing similar data: "It's just another indication that we're destroying the life-support system of the planet. Nature's resilient, but we're pushing her to such extremes that eventually it will cause a collapse of the system." Must reading. Source: [New York Times](#).

## **National Park System Issues**

**Invasive and Exotic Species** – News on exotic or invasive species and diseases that have appeared or may soon appear in NPS areas and efforts to counter them:

- *Assateague Island NS* – [Pythiosis](#), a disease that traditionally has been associated with Latin America and Gulf states in the United States, where it is found in waters that do not freeze, has now been found in the famous Chincoteague pony herd. Seven of the ponies had to be put down last month due to the fungus-like disease, which produced "ghastly lesions and other problems that proved too difficult to defeat." Supporters are pinning their long-term hopes on a prevention vaccine under development, along with enhanced treatment for ponies in the grips of the infection. Source: [CNN](#).
- *Grand Teton NP* – Because of the shutdown, the public will likely have more time to weigh in on the park's plans to relocate and eradicate the Tetons' mountain goat population. A new date has not yet been set; the PEPC website itself is down. The park's proposal to rid the Tetons of about 100 or so non-native mountain goats comes from concern about impacts to a small and vulnerable native bighorn sheep herd that dwells in some of the same nooks of the range. Park Service policy demands that steps be taken to prevent exotic species from displacing native species. Source: [Jackson Hole Daily](#).

**Park Carrying Capacity** – Management challenges pertaining to the balance between park protection and use:

- *Zion NP* – Zion, which has been suffering from severe traffic congestion and looking at options for relieving it, planned to test a mandatory shuttle service within the park from December 22nd to December 31st to help reduce traffic and parking congestion over the holidays. The plan called for buses to leave the visitor center starting at 8 a.m. and head up canyon to designated trail stops, with the shuttles running every 10 minutes during peak hours. Source: [KSNV News](#).

## **From The Archives**

This section contains incidents taken from *Morning Report* issues published during the corresponding week (approximately) 25 years ago in 1994. All entries appear in the original verb tense; "submitters" are those people who originally submitted the incident report.

- *Carlsbad Caverns NP* – A bomb threat was called in to the Carlsbad police department on their 911 emergency line at 9:15 a.m. on December 31, 1993. The female caller, who had a European accent, said that a bomb would go off in the park at noon. The visitor center and cavern were cleared by 10:45 a.m. Dog teams from Holloman AFB were transported to the park by a U.S. Customs helicopter. State and county officers assisted in securing and searching the area. No trace of a bomb was found, and the park was reopened at 5 p.m. The caller's voice is on tape, and several leads are being followed. The investigation is being conducted jointly by rangers and Carlsbad investigators; the regional law enforcement specialist will likely assist in this effort. Submitted by Tony Bonanno.
- *Colonial NHP* – Immediately after taking off from a private plane airport in Williamsburg at 10:30 p.m. on January 2nd, a Cessna 206A single-engine aircraft lost all power and went into a glide. The pilot was unable to return to the airport and had only three possible choices as to where he could come down – the James River, a swamp, or the three-lane Colonial Parkway. He chose the latter. While landing, however, the plane's tail assembly struck the lower wire of

an overhead power line, which threw the aircraft out of control. It bounced several times, then went off the road, down a short embankment, and into bordering trees. Park rangers were notified of the incident and arrived at the scene along with state police around midnight. The pilot was not hurt, but his plane was declared a total loss. The FAA was notified and is investigating. Submitted by Dick Young.

- *Santa Monica Mountains NRA* – On December 11, 1993, rangers arrested a former NPS employee at the Diamond X ranch, where he was attempting to provoke an encounter with a park employee in breach of a legal restraining order which had been issued the same day. During the arrest, rangers discovered that he was wearing a concealed firearm and that he had several other firearms and dangerous weapons in his vehicle. Foronda was carrying a .32 caliber semi-automatic handgun which was loaded and backed up with three additional magazines. A .25 caliber semi-automatic handgun was discovered inside the passenger compartment of his pickup; the pouch containing the handgun also held two fully loaded magazines. An AR-15 assault rifle with a 30-round magazine was found inside the pickup's cargo area; alongside it were six more 30-round and two 20-round magazines. Rangers also found an eight-inch expandable baton and a two-edged hard plastic knife. During his booking on state stalking and felony and misdemeanor weapons charges, rangers discovered an NPS badge, and found that the man had last been employed at Death Valley during the summer of 1993. The badge, however, came from another park. He had also worked at seven or more other parks. The man told rangers that "law enforcement is the enemy, therefore you are the enemy." During an interview on December 13th, he said this his desire was to be killed by a law enforcement person. Submitted by Bryan Sutton.

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- Issue Contributors: John Townsend, Maureen Finnerty, Mark Forbes, Ann Razor, Butch Farabee, Ginny Rousseau, Alice Hobbs, Joan Anzelmo, Cathy Halainen

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](mailto:BHalainen@gmail.com). Please don't submit them via his personal email address or Facebook page.

## **A Closing Observation**

"The pressures of a growing population, self-interest, and shortness of vision are now the greatest enemies of the national park idea."

Photographer [Ansel Adams](#), cited in Director George Hartzog's *Battling for the National Parks* (1988)

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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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