



## The Coalition Weekly Report Wednesday, March 27, 2019

Volume 3

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### Editor's Note

There will be no newsletter on April 3rd. The next edition will come out on Wednesday, April 10th.

### Incidents

#### **Grand Teton NP Rangers Conduct Nighttime Rescue Of Lost Skiers**

On the evening of Thursday, February 28th, Teton Interagency Dispatch received a call from Jackson Hole Mountain Resort regarding two skiers who were lost in Granite Canyon, an area of the park located north of the resort.

Four people – two men, each 24 years old, and two women, one 28 and the other 31 – had taken the Teton Chairlift late in the day for a final downhill run. They left the ski area by going under a boundary rope and entered an area closed due to hazardous conditions. Two of them made it down, but the other two got lost.

The lost skiers had cell phone access and were able to contact a friend who in turn contacted the ski patrol and then park dispatch. A Teton County Search and Rescue helicopter conducted an aerial reconnaissance, using location information communicated by the lost skiers, but had difficulty finding them due to sunset and diminished light.

Three rangers were transported to a location near the top of the chairlift so that they could search the canyon, using GPS coordinates from the cell phone. The pair were in a high avalanche and hazard area with steep terrain, cliffs, and numerous trees. The rangers employed ropes and belay systems as they moved down the canyon. They were finally able to verbally contact the pair and found them in the Spock Chutes area around 11 p.m. Both were okay. All five then climbed back up the mountain to the ski area boundary, reaching it at 2:30 a.m. then descending to the base of the slope.

Source: Denise Germann, [Grand Teton NP](#).

#### **George Washington Memorial Parkway Highway Reopens Following Shutdown Due To Huge Sinkhole**

The George Washington Memorial Parkway fully reopened to traffic on Saturday, March 23rd, after repairs were made to a large sinkhole that compromised the road Friday morning.

For about four hours on Friday morning, a portion of the parkway was closed in both directions between Virginia Route 123 and the Beltway near the American Legion Bridge. The sinkhole was

discovered before 6 a.m. in the northbound lanes near Dead Run. After assessments determined the southbound lanes were safe, traffic resumed flowing southbound about 10 a.m.

NPS crews worked through the night to address drainage issues and fill in the sinkhole, which was ten feet deep, twelve feet wide and thirty feet long.

Source: Kristi King, [WTOP News](#).

## **National Park System Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents**

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

- *Statue of Liberty NM* – Therese Okoumou, who climbed the base of the statue last July 4th to protest the separation of families at the Mexican border and was later convicted on several misdemeanor counts, was sentenced in federal court on March 19th. She came to her sentencing with her face entirely covered with clear sticky tape, irritating the judge, who refused to proceed until she removed it. The judge opted not to send her to prison, instead sentencing her to 200 hours of community service and five years of probation, but berated her for what he thought was a lack of concern for rescuers whose safety she had jeopardized. The article includes some good photos. Source: [Associated Press via NBC News](#).
- *Shenandoah NP* – Crews are finally digging out a 40-mile stretch of Skyline Drive after a series of winter storms closed it for more than four months. The park hopes to open the southern portion of the road by early April. The closure, which was one of the longest in decades, was instituted after ice storms pounded the region's Blue Ridge Mountains. The five-week partial government shutdown further delayed the cleanup. The road remains closed from near Elkton to where it ends in the south near Waynesboro. Source: [Associated Press via The Star](#).

## **Congressional Actions**

Reports on legislation, upcoming hearings and new public laws of relevance to the national parks, prepared by Don Hellmann, former assistant director, legislative and Congressional affairs for the National Park Service.

### **New Public Laws**

Nothing to report.

### **Senate Actions**

The Senate was not in session during the week of March 18th.

### **House Actions**

The House was not in session during the week of March 18th.

## **National Park Service**

### **National Park System**

**BSA Honors NPS** – The Boy Scouts of America recently presented the NPS with the Hornaday Gold Certificate in a ceremony at the Department of the Interior. The certificate was created to recognize groups that have made significant contributions to conservation and youth education on a national or international level. An Eagle Scout from Texas presented the award to former Eagle Scout and acting director Dan Smith. The Boy Scouts and the NPS work together in many ways, including Eagle Scout

service projects, unit-level service projects, and the NPS scout ranger program. The article includes photos of the event. Source: [Scoutingmagazine.org](https://scoutingmagazine.org).

**Winnebago Partners With NPF To Support Service** – Winnebago Industries, Inc. has announced a multi-year partnership with the National Park Foundation in support of the Find Your Park/Encuentra Tu Parque program. Company CEO Michael Happe had this to say about the new arrangement: “We firmly believe that America’s national parks offer unparalleled opportunities to experience the beauty of nature and the depth of our shared heritage at some of the most scenic and historic locations in the United States. It is an honor to support the work of the National Park Foundation in pursuit of our shared goal, to connect more people with transformative outdoor experiences.” Source: [KIOW News](https://www.kioh.com).

**RV Company Publishes Guides To National Parks** – [RVshare](https://rvshare.com), the country’s “first and largest peer-to-peer RV rental marketplace,” has developed online guides to all 60 of the country’s national parks. According to the company’s customer data, more than half of RV renters are headed to national parks. “In response, RVshare's team of travel experts created these guides to serve as an easy-to-use online resource to navigate the ins and outs of national parks,” said the company in announcing the guides. “They provide valuable tips in one place, including the best hiking trails, nearby towns and entertainment, where to camp, and more.” You can check out the guides at this link: <https://rvshare.com/national-parks>. Source: PR Newswire.

## **Around The Parks**

Reports on activities in the parks, listed in alphabetical order. [**NOTE:** The signing into law of the comprehensive John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act led to numerous changes in the National Park System, including new areas, new designations, boundary changes, etc. Those are alluded to in the relevant following entries as simply “the Act”].

- *Baltimore-Washington Parkway* – “Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan said [on March 20th] that a state takeover of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway is the only ‘viable long-term solution’ to fixing the pothole-ridden highway and bringing relief to the hundreds of thousands of commuters who use the route between Washington and Baltimore,” reports the *Washington Post*. “Hogan (R) is asking the state’s congressional delegation to support a transfer of the National Park Service’s portion of the parkway to the state. In turn, Hogan says, the state will make significant upgrades to the worn-out road — chief among them adding up to four toll lanes.” A section of the road has become so potholed that the NPS dropped the speed limit from 55 mph to 40 mph. Adds the *Post*: “The number of motorists who have become stranded because of flat tires or damaged rims has been growing since last month, according to AAA crews. Some drivers have turned to Twitter to complain, calling the scenic parkway ‘hell on earth,’ ‘a hot mess’ and ‘downright dangerous.’” Source: Luz Lazo, [Washington Post](https://www.washingtonpost.com).
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* – The park has okayed the final EIS for the replacement of the Blue Ridge Parkway bridge over I-26, part of the 22.2-mile widening of the interstate from I-40/I-240 to the U.S. 25 Connector (exit 54). The NPS is a cooperating agency for the project, and has been involved in the project planning, preparation, and analysis that are documented in the FEIS. The NPS announced on March 22nd that it would adopt the NCDOT document. Source: Bill Moss, [Hendersonville Lightning](https://www.hendersonvillelightning.com).
- *Camp Nelson NM* – The NPS held an open house last Tuesday as a first step in the process of gathering input for a draft foundation document that will guide decision-making at this new site, created by the Act. The Civil War site, located in central Kentucky, served as a recruiting ground for black soldiers and a refugee camp for families. Source: Alan Lytle, [WUKY News](https://www.wukynews.com).
- *Cape Hatteras NS* – “This summer will mark 20 years since the historic, hotly debated, widely watched and ultimately successful move of the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse,” reports WITN in North Carolina. “A beacon of North Carolina, the National Park Service planned for years and worked for months to save the lighthouse from rising tides and the migrating shoreline along

the barrier islands known as the Outer Banks as the ocean crept closer to its base in Buxton...The Park Service plans to commemorate the move this summer with special programming at the Cape Hatteras Light Station. The new site now features an exhibit documenting the entire effort and the mechanics involved.” Source: Anna Phillips, [WITN News](#).

- *Death Valley NP* – Under a provision of the Act, about 35,000 acres of land was transferred to the park from BLM, increasing its size to 3,422,024 acres. About 93 percent of the park is designated as wilderness, the sixth-largest wilderness area in the nation and the largest outside of Alaska; the Act added 87,999 acres of wilderness in North Eureka Valley, Panamint Valley, Warm Springs, Ibex, Bowling Alley, and Axe Head. The Act also designated 5.3 miles of Surprise Canyon Creek as a "wild river," thereby providing further protection to this rare desert creek and adjacent Panamint City, an 1870s silver mining ghost town. Source: [National Park Traveler](#).
- *Franklin D. Roosevelt NHS* – The Act authorized the park to acquire 89 acres of land adjacent to its current boundary. The parcel, which is owned by Scenic Hudson, consists of open fields on the north side of the park entrance road. According to Larry Turk, the park’s superintendent, it’s main benefit will be to preserve and further protect both the park and the abutting viewshed. Funding for the acquisition will come from private donors or land acquisition funds. Source: A.J. Martelli, [Poughkeepsie Journal](#).
- *Glacier Bay NP&P* – The park has selected the businesses that will provide cruise ship services in the park as of this fall. A panel of technical experts reviewed each proposal package that was submitted in response to the park’s solicitation; new ten-year concession contracts were awarded to seven businesses – Princess Cruise Lines, Holland America Line, NCL (Bahamas), Carnival (Cunard Line), Seabourn Cruise Line, Viking Cruises and Royal Caribbean Cruises. The contracts will become effective on October 1st. Source: Philip Hooge, [Glacier Bay NP&P](#).
- *Grand Teton NP* – “People who have long been critical of a plan to put more cell towers in Grand Teton National Park are getting the opportunity to officially weigh in on the project,” reports the Associated Press. The park is seeking comments from the public on plans for a new network of cell towers “amid questions about how the National Park Service balances public safety with the experience of wilderness.” The park currently has two cell towers as part of a system built piecemeal-fashion, with some fiber-optic lines buried without conduit and poorly mapped. The lines are vulnerable to damage, according to an NPS analysis and proposal for nine additional towers and related equipment. Source: Mead Gruver, [Associated Press](#).
- *Ocmulgee Mounds NHP* – The Act expanded the 700-acre park to 2,800 acres and changed its name to Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park (it was previously a national monument). The park is a prehistoric American Indian site that has been inhabited by humans for at least 17,000 years. The mounds were constructed for the leaders and elite. The expansion of the park will allow visitors to explore an area by the river that was inhabited by a much larger group of people. Source: Laura Corley, [Macon Telegraph](#).
- *Pearl Harbor NM/Honouliuli NHS* – Under a provision of the Act, two NPS sites on Oahu have new names. The *USS Arizona*, once a stand-alone memorial and then part of World War II Valor in the Pacific NM, is now part of Pearl Harbor National Memorial along with several other related sites located nearby. Superintendent Jacqueline Ashwell had this to say about the change: “The park and its partners are universally delighted with the name change that was signed into law by the president this week. Our prior name was rather long and unwieldy and difficult to remember. Everyone still referred to us as ‘the USS Arizona Memorial’, even though we now protect and interpret additional memorials and several historic remnants of the attack on Oahu.” The Arizona Memorial visitor center, the *USS Utah* and *USS Oklahoma* memorials, six chief petty officer bungalows on Ford Island and three pairs of mooring quays along historic Battleship Row are also included in the new memorial. The legislation also changed the name of Honouliuli National Monument, which was created in 2015, to Honouliuli National Historic Site, making it consistent with other Japanese American incarceration sites managed by the

Service, such as Manzanar NHS and Minidoka NHS. Source: William Cole, [Honolulu Star Advertiser](#).

- *Tule Lake NM* – The area that includes the Tule Lake Segregation Center and Camp Tulelake, formerly the Tule Lake Unit of the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument, an area that included nine separate units, mostly in Hawaii and Alaska, is now a separate unit of the National Park System. Under provisions of the Act, World War II Valor in the Pacific NM was abolished and replaced with Pearl Harbor National Memorial, Aleutian Islands World War II NM, and Tule Lake NM. Larry Whalon, superintendent of Lava Beds NM, which administers Tule Lake, said that the impacts of the designation will be minimal, although it allows more decisions to be made locally rather than through the office in Hawaii that oversaw Valor in the Pacific. Source: Lee Juillerat, [Klamath Falls Herald and News](#).
- *Yucca House NM* – The monument, located not far from Mesa Verde NP, would grow six-fold under legislation introduced in Congress this month. House Resolution 1492 and Senate Resolution 641 would allow for a 160-acre land donation to the monument. Two local residents have agreed to donate the parcel, located along the park's southeastern border, in order to help preserve ancient cultural sites. The bill would expand the monument to 193 acres, and it coincides with the monument's 100-year anniversary. Source: Jim Mimiaga, [Durango Herald](#).

## **Federal Government**

Recent news stories, web postings, statements, and press releases pertaining to Congress (excepting official business, which appears above), the administration, DOI, and other public land management agencies that have bearing on the NPS.

### **Administration and Government**

**Why The Administration Is Losing In Court** – The March 19th *Washington Post* has an article on why the Trump administration is constantly losing in court on all fronts – including on environmental issues of consequence to the NPS. Here are excerpts: “Federal judges have ruled against the Trump administration at least 63 times over the past two years, an extraordinary record of legal defeat that has stymied large parts of the president’s agenda on the environment, immigration and other matters. In case after case, judges have rebuked Trump officials for failing to follow the most basic rules of governance for shifting policy, including providing legitimate explanations supported by facts and, where required, public input. Many of the cases are in early stages and subject to reversal...[but] regardless of whether the administration ultimately prevails, the rulings so far paint a remarkable portrait of a government rushing to implement far-reaching changes in policy without regard for long-standing rules against arbitrary and capricious behavior.” According to a Georgetown Law School expert on administrative law, those attempting to institute new policies “don’t even come close” to explaining their actions, thereby “making it very easy for the courts to reject them because they’re not doing their homework.” The article’s authors also note that plaintiffs in nearly two-thirds of the cases have argued that the administration has violated the Administrative Procedure Act, a law that forms “the primary bulwark against arbitrary rule.” The government normally wins about 70 percent of its cases, but, according to a database maintained by the Institute for Policy Integrity at the New York University School of Law, the Trump administration’s win rate is around 6 percent. There’s much more of interest in this fascinating article, available at the following link. Source: Fred Barbash and Deanna Paul, [Washington Post](#).

**Administration Proposes Federal Pay System Reform** – “The Trump administration will issue new pay systems for certain occupations this year,” reports *Government Executive*, “part of a slew of civil service reforms it plans, including hiring changes, easier firing, more interns and the ‘reskilling’ of employees in antiquated positions. The president’s FY 2020 budget proposal also promises regulations establishing the new pay systems for ‘special occupations’ later this year. They will focus on jobs in which ‘the General Schedule classification and pay system are not aligned to labor-market realities.’ The president’s pay agent...is authorized to issue the special pay systems under a never-before-used



provision of the 1990 Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act.” Source: Eric Katz, [Government Executive](#).

## **Department of the Interior**

**Decisions By Interior Secretary Favored Former Clients** – “As a former fossil fuels lobbyist who now leads the Interior Department, David Bernhardt has oversight of the industry he used to represent,” reported CNN on March 5th. “While Bernhardt has recused himself for a period of time from certain dealings with his former clients, he serves as one of the main architects of the Trump administration's deregulation agenda that has benefitted energy companies -- including some of Bernhardt's former clients. Since Bernhardt joined the department in 2017, it has made at least 15 policy changes, decisions or proposals that would directly benefit Bernhardt's former clients. In each case, the past clients shared comments or requests that the department's actions have granted or aligned with, according to a CNN review.” Source: Scott Bronstein, Curt Devine, Drew Griffin and Audrey Ash, [CNN](#).

**Oil Industry Brags About Connections To Bernhardt** – No doubt the above-noted decisions and the presence of Bernhardt in DOI are purely coincidental, with no cause-effect relationship. Oh, wait – then there's this from the *Huffington Post*, posted a couple of weeks later: “Participants at a meeting of oil industry executives and lobbyists can be heard laughing uproariously at boasts related to ‘unprecedented access’ to key Trump administration officials in a secretly recorded tape obtained by *Reveal* from the Center for Investigative Reporting. The recording was made as some 100 executives of the Independent Petroleum Association of America (IPAA) gathered at a hotel in Southern California in the summer of 2017 to celebrate their new federal clout. They also hailed the rise of one of their own: oil and gas lobbyist David Bernhardt, who had been picked by President Donald Trump for the No. 2 post at the Department of the Interior.” Bernhardt demurs, saying he's had no contact with the two IPAA members cited in the *Reveal* report, so no worries. Source: Mary Papenfuss, [Huffington Post](#).

## **House and Senate**

**Senator Announces Bandelier Expansion Plan** – Senator Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.), a member of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, has announced his plans to introduce legislation changing the name of Bandelier National Monument to Bandelier National Park and Preserve. One of the reasons for the name change, says the senator, is the prestige of having “national park” as part of a unit's title. But there's a second reason, according to a report on KRWG, that's considerably more consequential: “Two years ago, President Trump signed an executive order to slash the size of Bears Ears National Monument in southern Utah by 85 percent. Much like Bandelier, Bears Ears is home to land and historic sites that hold deep significance for tribes, including Zuni Pueblo and the Navajo Nation. The Trump administration has already started the process to open up some of these lands to oil and gas exploration and uranium mining. Heinrich's legislation would permanently protect Bandelier's resources by specifically prohibiting oil and gas drilling and other mineral and geothermal development within park boundaries.” Source: [KRWG News](#).

**Legislation Introduced Expanding Santa Monica Mountains NRA** – On March 13th, Representative Adam Schiff and Senators Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris, all from California, introduced legislation that would add Griffith Park and much of the Los Angeles River to Santa Monica Mountains NRA. The legislation, called the Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act, would add more than 191,000 acres of the so-called Rim of the Valley – which stretches from the Simi Hills and Santa Susana Mountains to the Verdugo and San Gabriel Mountains and also includes the Rose Bowl and the Hollywood Bowl – to the park. Said Schiff: “The Rim of the Valley is the critical bridge between our urban city centers, suburbs in the Los Angeles basin and the spectacular wilderness that surrounds us – our bill would help protect these lands for generations to come. As more of this area is developed and open space diminishes, the wildlife it supports is increasingly at risk. Congress must preserve the Rim of the Valley for the next generations, but we must act quickly on a bipartisan basis or this once in a century opportunity will be gone forever.” If the bill passes, it would provide the Service with the authority to repair trails, roads and public facilities; monitor and study wildlife and ecosystems; participate in conservation and recreation planning; and acquire additional public lands. The expansion would not, however, infringe on private property rights or the jurisdiction of local land use

authorities. The text of the bill is not yet available, but you can find it [at this link](#) when it's posted.

Source: [Los Feliz Register](#).

## **Climate and Conservation**

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

### **National and Worldwide Issues**

**The Bad News** – The news on climate and conservation issues these days is inevitably grim, but needs to be shared – mitigated, when and where possible, with good news, which follows. First the former:

- *Heat Waves Increasing* – According to an [Associated Press study](#), heat waves were twice as likely as cold waves in the United States between 1920 and 2018. Researchers reviewed the data from 424 weather stations throughout the U.S. mainland and tallied the number of times that daily high-temperature records were tied or broken versus the number of low-temperature records that were broken. If climate change wasn't happening, odds are that the high and low-temperature records would be broken roughly the same number of times over the nearly 100 year period. Source: Monica Medina and Miro Korenha, [Our Daily Planet](#).
- *Western Snowpack Decline Better Quantified* – The December issue of *Geophysical Research Letters* includes a report on decreasing western snowpacks: “Researchers have mapped the snowpack of the coterminous United States between 1982 and 2016 at the smallest scale to date, using 6.5-square-kilometer grids. Previous maps used 103-square-kilometer grids. For 13 percent of the area of the western U.S., annual maximum snow mass decreased by 41 percent on average over that period. Additionally, the snow season was 34 days shorter on average for 9 percent of the country.” Source: *Geophysical Research Letters*.

**The Good News** – Despite the continuous drumbeat of bad news on the climate and conservation fronts, some headway is being made in meeting and dealing with related issues:

- *Judge Stops Drilling Pending Assessment Of Climate Change Impacts* – On March 19th, a federal judge ruled that the Interior Department violated federal law by failing to take into account the climate impact of its oil and gas leasing in the West, reports the *Washington Post*: “The decision by U.S. District Judge Rudolph Contreras of Washington could force the Trump administration to account for the full climate impact of its energy-dominance agenda, and it could signal trouble for the president’s plan to boost fossil fuel production across the country. Contreras concluded that the Interior Department’s Bureau of Land Management ‘did not sufficiently consider climate change’ when making decisions to auction off federal land in Wyoming to oil and gas drilling under President Barack Obama in 2015 and 2016. The judge temporarily blocked drilling on about 300,000 acres of land in the state.” Source: Juliet Eilperin, [Washington Post](#).

### **National Park System Issues**

**Wildland Fire** – News pertaining to the impacts of worsening fire seasons, increasing WUI challenges, and related matters:

- *Whiskeytown NRA* – There’s a dramatic new 15-minute-long video out entitled “[A Community United – The Redding Carr Fire](#)” that shows the impacts of the Carr Fire on Whiskeytown NRA and the surrounding area and provides a good idea of what it’s like dealing with increasingly severe post-climate change wildfires. Dave Keltner, the park’s chief ranger, is among the many people interviewed about the response to the fire. The film was produced by the California Highway Patrol. Source: [YouTube](#).

**Native Flora and Fauna** – Recent news pertaining to the protection, propagation and advancement of species now or formerly native to the national parks – or removal of those that aren't:

- *Isle Royale NP* – The park is resuming its wolf transplant project. Gray wolves will soon be taken from Michipicoten Island in Canadian territory and transferred to Isle Royale. Source: Chris Clor, [9and10news.com](#).
- *Santa Monica Mountains NRA* – According to a new report, two populations of mountain lions in Southern California could go extinct within 50 years under certain conditions. Researchers determined that it's not their small numbers that are threatening them; it's a genetic diversity problem due to inbreeding and connectivity issues: cities, real estate and freeways keep the lions from breeding with other populations. The research predicts that extinction is almost certain. An NPS wildlife ecologist is quoted in the story. Source: Ezra David Romero, [Capital Public Radio](#).

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

- *Arches NP* – The park's proposal to develop a reservation system has been tabled "in the face of mounting opposition and concerns about the deep economic wounds such a program could inflict by slashing visitation at the world-renowned southern Utah attraction...The pressure grew this month with the public release of an economic impact analysis showing that nearby Moab tourism businesses could experience a \$22 million hit in the program's first year. The analysis predicted visitation would dip by 5 percent to 10 percent, then rebound as the public adjusted to the new system." Source: Brian Maffly, [Salt Lake Tribune](#).
- *Petroglyphs NM* – The park has completed a new trails plan in an effort to put a stop to the more than 100 miles of visitor-created social trails that are damaging the monument. The newly-approved plan reduces the number of access points by nearly half to 30, adds signs to make it easier for hikers to navigate the park, and provides for cleaning up and converting about 20 miles of social trails into a new 39-mile trail system. That leaves 93.5 miles of unauthorized paths that will be closed off until vegetation can grow over them. Source: Jackie Kent, [KRQE News](#).

**External Pressures** – Management issues related to usage or development in culturally or naturally sensitive areas abutting parks:

- *Theodore Roosevelt NP* – Parties involved in a dispute over whether North Dakota regulators should be involved in the siting of an oil refinery near the park recently filed their initial legal arguments in state court. The refinery would be just three miles from the park, which, incidentally, is the state's biggest tourism draw. In question is whether or not the company constructing the refinery skirted state law in getting the project cleared. The article provides the perspective of both sides in the dispute. Source: Blake Nicholson, [Associated Press](#).

**Systemic Pollution** – Issues pertaining to air, light, sound, water and other forms of pollution associated with industrial development, population growth and other sources:

- *Glen Canyon NRA* – Mercury concentrations within Lake Powell are highest in side canyons within the lower portion of the reservoir, according to a new [U.S. Geological Survey report](#). This finding is part of a study to better understand why mercury concentrations in striped bass are higher in the lower part of the reservoir. Striped bass in the lower half of the lake have consistently exceeded EPA human consumption advisory limits for mercury over the last few years. Critical work remains to be done in Lake Powell to determine mercury trends during different times of the year, geographic areas and habitat and to gain a better understanding of the relative contribution of sediment versus water-column mercury methylation. Source: [USGS](#).



## The Coalition

Summary of recent developments within the Coalition, including some of the actions that CNPCA took on your behalf.

**Coalition Comments On Administration's Proposed FY 2020 NPS Budget** – On March 11th, Coalition Chair Phil Francis issued a statement of the administration's budget proposal. The full text follows. Board member Don Hellmann, former assistant director, legislative and Congressional affairs for the National Park Service, also prepared a detailed assessment of the proposal; his analysis follows Phil's comments:

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“The Trump administration's proposed budget is appalling. It represents an enormous threat to the protection and preservation of our national parks and public lands. National parks are suffering from significant reductions in staffing due to decreased annual appropriations in the past decade. Effectively managing the high visitation at our parks is proving more and more challenging with funding that has not kept up with the National Park Service's costs. And, the backlog of deferred maintenance projects continues to grow.

“Over the past 10 years, the NPS budget has lost 17% when adjusted for inflation. Additional cuts would be devastating and would put park resources, park visitors, and park employees at greater risk.

“President Trump's budget will deal a devastating blow to the National Park Service, at a time when the agency is still struggling to recover its footing and catch up on lost work and planning due to the recent government shutdown. From the drastic cut to National Heritage Areas to the waste of money for reorganization, this isn't about making small cuts that will go unnoticed, it's about drastic cuts that will be inconsistent with protecting America's special places and programs. It's irresponsible.

“The de-funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund shows this Administration disdain for parks, public lands, and the American people who enjoy them. A mere few weeks ago, Acting Interior Secretary David Bernhardt was touting his support for LWCF and public lands in the broadly bipartisan legislation that easily passed Congress. But today's budget tells a starkly different story.

“This Administration does not appear to be dealing in reality. We can only hope that Congress will stand up to this Administration and do the right thing, to ensure our parks and public lands are protected for the enjoyment of future generations.”

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On March 11th, the president announced his FY 2020 budget for the federal government and it was transmitted to Congress. Subsequently, additional details about the budget proposal have become available.

The budget requests \$2.75 billion in FY 2020 for the National Park Service. The NPS received appropriations of \$3.22 billion in the current fiscal year, FY 2019. The \$2.75 billion requested by the president for NPS in FY 2020 is a mirror image of the president's proposed \$2.7 billion for FY 2019, which was rejected by Congress. This proposed budget has been also dismissed by members of both parties of Congress.

The budget request includes the following proposed funding levels:

- *Operations of the National Park System (ONPS)* – The budget requests \$2.425 billion in FY 2020, a drop from the current \$2.5 billion. This level of funding would result in the loss of at least an additional 425 FTEs within the Service in FY 2020. The budget also calls for funding of \$14 million for fixed cuts to mitigate their impact, but this amount does not reflect the pay increase that Congress agreed to for federal employees in FY 2019, thereby not reflecting the total amount needed to mitigate the real fixed costs to the Service. On a bright note, the NPS

requested that Congress authorize ONPS appropriations in FY 2020 be available for two years, consistent with practice for other bureaus within the Department of the Interior. The change also will allow the NPS to mitigate the impact of continuing resolutions in the future. The proposed budget also includes a request of \$5.7 million for the NPS portion of the Department of the Interior's plans to reorganize the department into 12 unified regions across the country, and \$3.9 million for operations at new units of the National Park System recently established by Congress.

- *Centennial Challenge* – There's no request for funding for FY 2020 in the proposal. The NPS has \$20 million in appropriations in FY 2019. The budget is requesting that the estimated \$1.4 million that would be raised through the sale of senior passes be the only funds available for matching through the Centennial Challenge program in FY 2020.
- *Natural Recreation and Preservation Programs (NRP)* – The budget requests \$35.3 million in FY 2020 (the NPS has \$64.1 million in its FY 2019 budget). As in previous years, the president is requesting no funding for the national heritage areas grant program in FY 2020. This request has consistently been ignored by Congress for the past several fiscal years. There's also no request for funding for the Chesapeake Gateways and Trails program.
- *Historic Preservation Fund (HPF)* – The budget asks for \$32.67 million in FY 2020, a significant drop from this fiscal year's \$102.6 million allocation. Within HPF, proposed funding levels are as follows: \$26.9 million for State Historic Preservation Offices and \$5.7 million for Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (currently \$49.6 million and \$11.7 million, respectively); no funding for FY 2020 for competitive grants to underserved communities or to document, interpret, and preserve historical sites associated with the Civil Rights Movement (currently \$15.25 million); no funding for Save America's Treasures grants (currently \$13 million); no funding for grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (currently \$8 million); no funding for preservation grants to revitalize historic properties of national, State and local significance in order to restore, protect and foster economic development of rural villages and downtown areas (currently \$5 million); no funding for Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act grants; and no funding for Japanese American Confinement Sites grants.
- *Construction* – The budget requests \$246.3 million in FY 2020. The NPS has \$364.7 million in FY 2019.
- *Land Acquisition (LWCF)* – The budget requests \$6 million in FY 2020, a drastic cut from this fiscal year's \$168.4 million. Within the land acquisition account, funding is proposed as follows: No funding for state conservation grants (currently \$124 million), as the department wants to rely on the estimated \$113 million available from the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act revenues collected from oil and gas leasing in the Gulf of Mexico to provide funding for these state grants (by law, this GOMESA funding is supplemental to LWCF state grant funds and is not intended to supplant the LWCF grants); no funding for federal land acquisition or for inholdings, donations, and exchanges (currently \$34.4 million for federal land acquisition and \$4.9 million for other programs); and \$5 million the American Battlefield Protection (just half of what it currently receives).
- *Recreation Fee Program* – The budget also seeks a one-year extension of the authority for the recreation fee program authorized by the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act through September 30, 2022.

Source: Don Hellmann, Board Member, and Emily Thompson, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator.

[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.

- *White Sands NM* – On March 12th, a Texas man became disoriented during a sandstorm while hiking in the park and became lost. He'd planned his visit to the park to coincide with the passage of a major frontal system in order to photograph the dunes and clouds. He left his vehicle at 2 p.m. and hiked several miles into the dunes. When the front passed, blowing sand obscured the surrounding mountains and he became disoriented. A search was begun when rangers closing the park found his vehicle but were unable to find him. Due to rapidly falling temperatures, high winds, and winter storm warnings, limited efforts were continued throughout the night. The man eventually walked out to a highway west of the park visitor center, where he was found by a passing county deputy at 3:30 a.m. He was in very good condition considering what he'd been through. It's estimated that he'd walked over 20 miles in blowing sand with north winds between 25 and 35 mph and temperatures near freezing. Submitted by Chief Ranger Bob Appling.
- *Petroglyphs NM* – On the afternoon of March 13th, an interpretive ranger was contacted near the visitor center by a doctor who lives on a park inholding. He was verbally abusive, made threatening statements and briefly pointed a handgun at the ranger before leaving the area. The doctor lives on property adjacent to the visitor center; although he had previously expressed his unhappiness with the prospect of future federal acquisition of his two-acre residential property, he had not displayed any tendency towards violence. The ranger was the only NPS employee on duty at the time and therefore requested assistance from the chief ranger and Albuquerque police officers. The doctor returned to the scene after an Albuquerque officer arrived. He did not have his gun, but carried two long wooden staffs. He continued to be abusive, confrontational, and threatening, and at times acted irrationally, breaking a window in a nearby building. He eventually left the area without injuring anyone. After other officers arrived, the doctor was contacted by phone and asked to return to the park. He did so and continued his threatening and abusive behavior until arrested by the Albuquerque officers and charged with aggravated assault. Other charges are pending. Submitted by Chief Ranger Reed McCluskey.
- *Glen Canyon NRA* – On February 29, 1992, rangers discovered that 21 petroglyphs in the Mobius panel in Willow Gulch on the Escalante River had been seriously damaged. The petroglyphs, dating to about 950 to 1150 A.D., are part of a "billboard" of over 100 elements which is considered to be a highly significant scientific resource eligible for the national register. The panel is one of only a few such panels found in all of the Escalante canyons. The petroglyphs were damaged by scraping, which was apparently done with a sharp instrument to enhance them so they would show up better in photographs. Natural varnish was removed in the process and the petroglyphs' shapes were altered through careless tracing of the original outlines. On March 10th, an Escalante, Utah, man pled guilty to the destruction of the petroglyphs. As part of his plea agreement, he agreed that the archeological value of the panel he damaged was \$21,745; he also agreed to forfeit his 1990 Ford 4x4 pickup, and to reimburse the NPS \$2,846 for restoration and repair of the site and \$2,970 for direct government expenses. In exchange for this plea, the government has agreed to recommend a \$1,000 fine and dismiss the second count in the indictment for destruction of government property. Sentencing is scheduled for June. In a televised interview, the man's attorney stated that the case had cost his client \$25,000 and that his client had gotten the message of the importance of protecting archeological resources on federal lands. Submitted by Chief Ranger Tomie Lee.

## Acknowledgements

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- Editor: Bill Halainen
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- Regular Correspondents: Don Hellmann, Dennis Burnett, Rick Smith, Emily Thompson, and Duncan Morrow
- Issue Contributors: Mark Forbes, Cathy Halainen, Larry Frederick

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**

"In a thousand unseen ways we have drawn shape and strength from the land....The house of America is founded upon our land and if we keep that whole, then the storm can rage, but the house will stand forever."

President Lyndon B. Johnson

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The *Coalition Weekly Report* is a publication of [The Coalition To Protect America's National Parks](#). 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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