



The Coalition Weekly Report Wednesday, May 1, 2019

Volume 3

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Incidents

Grand Canyon NP Woman Falls To Her Death From South Rim

Rangers received reports of a person needing help near Pike Creek Vista early on the afternoon of April 23rd, but the 70-year-old woman fell 200 feet to her death before they could get to her. A technical rescue team used a park helicopter to find and recover her body later in the day.

The incident was the latest in a string of deaths that have happened at the canyon in recent weeks:

- Rangers were notified on April 3rd that a man had fallen over the edge of the canyon and later found the body of a 67-year-old man about 400 feet below the rim.
- In late March, a 50-year-old tourist from Hong Kong fell into the canyon while trying to take photos at Grand Canyon West, an area that is on the Hualapai Indian Reservation. That fall happened at Eagle Point, an area close to the Skywalk attraction.
- On March 26th, a body was found in a wooded area south of the Grand Canyon Village away from the rim. The cause of the death was being investigated at the time of the report.

Source: BrieAnna J. Frank, *Arizona Star* via [USA Today](#).

Colorado NM Hiker Rescued After Fall Into Canyon

The Mesa County Sheriff's Office received a 911 call last Sunday evening from a 45-year-old man who said he'd fallen into a canyon while hiking in the park.

Search and rescue personnel, sheriff's deputies, park rangers and Careflight crews found the man near the upper Liberty Cap trail. He had a strobe light and reflective gear that made it easier to spot him from the air.

Rescuers reached him around 2 a.m. He was taken to the hospital by helicopter, where he's being treated for serious injuries sustained in the fall.

Source: Joshua Vorse, [KKCO News](#).

Yellowstone NP Man Sentenced To Jail Term For Assault On Visitors

Jason Coombs, 30, who assaulted two visitors in a park bathroom last summer, spraying them both with bear spray, has been sentenced to six and a half years in federal prison. Coombs pleaded guilty to one count of aggravated assault with a dangerous weapon and one count of simple assault.

On July 18, 2018, park rangers responded to a 911 call of a sexual assault in progress. While responding, multiple 911 calls were received about an ongoing fight between two men. When rangers arrived on the scene, they found two men holding a third man – later identified as Coombs – pinned to the ground.

Investigation revealed that one of the men and his girlfriend had walked to the community bathrooms to use the facilities. When he exited the men's side, he heard a woman's voice screaming for help. The man then knocked on the door and when the woman continued to scream, he pushed it open. Inside he could see a pair of legs sticking out from under the far stall. When he opened the door he saw Coombs assaulting his girlfriend.

Coombs then turned and assaulted the boyfriend, launching the altercation. The man was bitten twice by Coombs, who also pulled out bear spray and sprayed the man and his girlfriend. All three individuals were exposed to the bear spray. The woman, who was told by her boyfriend to flee and call 911, ran outside and encountered a bystander who went into the bathroom, saw the fight, and helped keep Coombs pinned to the floor in the bathroom until law enforcement could arrive.

Upon completion of his prison sentence, Coombs will be on supervised release for 36 months and was ordered to pay \$2,199 in restitution and a \$125 special assessment.

Source: [KXLH News](#).

Sleeping Bear Dunes NL Glass Shards Spread Deliberately Along Park Beach

Thousands of glass shards were found spread across hundreds of yards of the park's coastline earlier this month.

A park visitor first reported the glass-covered stretch of beach near the park's Good Harbor picnic area. Rangers subsequently removed 2,500 pieces of glass from the beach, with more cleanup efforts to follow. "The volume of glass, fairly uniform in size, and the fact that it's not dumped in one spot like someone dumping garbage... it seems to us that it's malicious intent," said Tom Ulrich, the park's deputy superintendent.

This isn't the first time glass has been dumped at the park. In October 2017, large quantities were spread along a beach near the Lane Road parking area in Port Oneida. No suspects were identified, and the incident is still under investigation. Rangers are hoping this time someone has more information.

See the photo at the following link to get an idea of what the glass looks like.

Source: Lauren M. Johnson, [CNN](#).

San Antonio Missions NHP Three Sentenced For Vandalizing Missions

Two young women and a young man who defaced two of the park's missions with graffiti have been sentenced to five years probation, ordered to pay \$10,483 in restitution, and directed to perform 200 hours of community service. The judge specified that much of the latter is to be performed at the missions.

The trio admitted that they sprayed graffiti on walls, signs and in the parking lots at Mission San Jose and Mission San Juan in the early hours of June 21, 2018. Each of them apologized to the court, saying that the missions were tagged while they were under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Although part of the park, both missions have active Catholic parishes. In 2015, they were designated World Heritage sites.

Source: Guillermo Contreras, MySanAntonio.com.

National Park System Weekly Weather Impacts Update

The increasing frequency of climate-change-related severe weather closures and incidents in NPS areas has warranted the creation this intermittent Servicewide summary:

- *Yosemite NP* – The recovery from last winter’s heavy snows continues. Current estimates are that Glacier Point Road will be open by Memorial Day weekend and that Tioga Pass Road/Highway 120 will likely open in time for Fourth of July weekend. Campgrounds near Tuolumne Meadows in Yosemite are not likely to open until late July, even early August, and the season for the High Sierra Camps is at risk from such a small window of time available in a big snow year. Source: Tom Stienstra, *San Francisco Chronicle*.
- *Zion NP* – The Zion-Mount Carmel Highway which was closed on April 9th so that March’s flood damage could be repaired, reopened on April 27th. The road closure had forced visitors to take three-hour-long alternative routes to access the park. Some of the park’s more popular trails have yet to reopen, though. The Kayenta Trail and Upper Emerald Pools Trail, both popular attractions along the park’s main canyon, remain closed due to a landslide that occurred last July. The East Rim Trail, access to Hidden Canyon and access from the main canyon to Observation Point, closed since January, will not be fixed until those areas dry out and staff can make assessment of the work that needs to be undertaken. Source: David Demille, [St. George Spectrum](#).

National Park System Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents

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

- *Death Valley NP* – You’ll no doubt recall the incident a little while back in which three men broke into the enclosure protecting the unique and endangered Devil’s Hole pupfish and caused serious damage to the site. You probably also recall that they were discovered, arrested, tried and sentenced for their actions. Now you can read the “backstory” in *High Country News*. An article posted on the magazine’s webpage on April 15th, entitled “How a tiny endangered species put a man in prison,” provides details on what happened. You can read it at the following link. Source: Paige Blankenbuehler, [High Country News](#).
- *Hawaii Volcanoes NP* – Much of the famed Kilauea Iki Trail reopened in time for National Park Week – nearly a year after Kilauea’s extended eruption. The park was closed for 134 days last year. While much of the park and two-thirds of trail are now open, some areas remain closed for safety reasons. Source: Katia Hetter, [CNN](#).
- *Yosemite NP* – A story with additional details about last year’s falling death at Nevada Falls has been published in the *Sacramento Bee*. The victim, an 18-year-old Israeli visitor named Tomer Frankfurter, was hiking the Mist Trail with other international visitors he’d met on the park shuttle. He told them that he wanted to mimic photos that visitors commonly take of Telegraph Rock near Rio de Janeiro, then climbed over a cliff near the falls – despite warnings from the others. He soon yelled that he needed help; several people ran to him, grabbed his arms and wrists and attempted to pull him up. His arms became slippery with sweat, though, and his would-be rescuers were unable to hold onto him. Source: Bryant-Jon Anteola, [Sacramento Bee](#).

[National Fire Situation](#)

National Interagency Fire Center Fire Activity Continues In Central States

Synopsis

Fires are currently burning in Oklahoma, Kentucky, Florida, Missouri, Arizona and Colorado.

National Park Service Fire News

No wildfires were reported in NPS areas.

Current Incident Resource Commitments

Category	April 12th	April 19th	April 26th
Area Command Teams	0	0	0
NIMO Teams	0	0	0
Type 1 Teams	0	0	0
Type 2 Teams	0	0	0
Crews	0	0	2
Engines	49	9	19
Helicopters	0	1	1
Total FF/Overhead	205	60	189

Fires/Acreage

Category	2019 Total	2008-2018 Ave	2019 Variance
Year-to-Date Fires	9,532	18,654	- 9,122
Year-to-Date Acres	220,396	945,678	- 725,282

Sources: [NIFC National Fire Report](#).

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 in recess for the Easter holiday during the week of April 22nd.

House Actions

The House was in recess for the Easter holiday during the week of April 22nd.

National Park Service

National Park System

Protecting Yourself While Visiting A Park – On April 24th, CNN, reacting to the several recent deaths at Grand Canyon, ran a story on deaths in parks and how to prepare yourself before you visit one. It begins by noting that on average six people die in the parks each week. “The bottom line is, national parks highlight the very best natural beauty the country has to offer. And nature can be dangerous...[but] visitors can reduce their risk of injury if they: plan ahead and prepare properly, select the most appropriate activity that matches their skill set and experience, seek information before they arrive at the park about hazards and environmental conditions, follow rules and regulations, and...use sound judgment while recreating.” Source: AJ Willingham, [CNN](#).

Another ‘Parks You Should Visit’ List – It’s springtime, which means it’s time for journalists to start writing stories about parks. Lists are perennially popular, with three types commonly appearing – “the (pick a number) best parks,” “the (pick a number) least visited parks,” and “the (pick a number) best parks you’ve never visited but should see.” *Budget Travel* published one of the latter earlier this month. The ten sites they list are Chaco Culture, Glen Echo, Effigy Mounds, Manhattan Project, New Orleans Jazz, Wind Cave, Manzanar, Saguaro, Blue Ridge and Great Sand Dunes. Source: Maya Stanton, [Budget Travel](#).

Subaru Makes Donation To Parks – The National Park Foundation has announced that Subaru raised \$2.1 million for national parks through its 2018 Subaru Share the Love® Event. This donation enables the National Park Foundation to support waste reduction efforts and enhance public awareness and engagement across the National Park System. Source: [Sierra Sun Times](#).

Nissan Designs Truck For Park Usage – Not to be outdone by Subaru, Nissan is producing a new Ultimate Titan pickup for park-related uses; the project will “support the National Park Foundation,” though it’s not clear in what way. In any case, Nissan provided drawings of the new truck last month. It “was built in cooperation with contractors and Habitat for Humanity volunteers to make sure the truck meets all their professional needs. Nissan got three major requests – the Ultimate Work Titan needs to have off-road capability, a mobile office inside, and a high-capacity bed, including room for carrying ladders and lockable storage.” Check out the following link for a drawing of the truck. Source: Anthony Karr, [Motor1.com](#).

Around The Parks

Reports on activities in the parks, listed in alphabetical order.

- *Birmingham Civil Rights NM* – Renovations have begun on a long-vacant motel in Birmingham that once housed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The 65-year-old A.G. Gaston Motel, featured in *The Negro Motorist Green Book* for black travelers, is being revitalized as part of the new Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument. The \$10 million project includes shoring up masonry damaged by decades of weather and taking down newer additions to the structure. Source: Melanie Eversley, [The Grio](#).
- *Cabrillo NM* – The park is seeking comments on the EA for its draft trail management plan. In particular, the planning team is seeking public input regarding the accuracy and adequacy of the information and analysis presented in the plan or information that could influence changes to the preferred alternative. Comments are being accepted until May 13th at [the park’s PEPC webpage](#). Source: [KUSI News](#).
- *Cape Hatteras NS* – An event will be held on July 1st to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the relocation of Cape Hatteras Lighthouse. The free event will start at 9:30 a.m. near the lighthouse. The celebration will include speeches, a question and answer session with expert panelists, artifacts from the lighthouse move, expanded interpretive ranger talks, activities for children, and free lighthouse climbing. Source: [Island Free Press](#).
- *Cape Lookout NS* – Due to dramatic shifts in water and sand levels, the Coast Guard is proposing to make changes to a water route that would permanently affect access to the park. Significant shoaling between Barden Inlet Buoy 8 to Barden Inlet Light 35 is prompting USCG

to consider discontinuing 21 navigational aids along the waterway. The park is only accessible by boat, and Barden Inlet, a federally mandated channel, is the main access. If those 21 visual aids are removed, ferry boat captains who are licensed by the Coast Guard would be operating in "non-navigable channels" and would face losing their licenses should there be any accident involving a ferry or tour service. This proposal would affect the park's authorized ferry and tour services, which serve around 120,000 visitors and about 100,000 recreational boat visitors annually. If this happens, the ferry services will likely have no choice but to discontinue service to the park. If you're interested in weighing in on the proposal, you can do so by submitting comments no later than May 6th, either by filling out [a USCG data sheet](#) (please refer to project number 05-19-029(D) in the paperwork), or by sending your comments via either email to CGD5Waterways@uscg.mil or by mail to U.S. Coast Guard Fifth District Waterways Management (dpw), 431 Crawford Street, Room 100, Portsmouth, VA 23704, Attn: Ethan Coble. Source: Katie Caviness and Christy Hutchings, [WCTI News](#).

- *Glacier NP* – The Blackfeet Nation, whose lands abut the park, is in the process of developing an agricultural resource management plan for the tribe's 1.5 million acre reservation that includes a proposal for a "Blackfeet national park." The plan will go up for a ratification vote by the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council on May 1st. Glacier Superintendent Jeff Mow is supportive of the effort and has been working to improve relations with the tribe. In 2017, he agreed to move some of the park's Native America Speaks programs onto the reservation for the first time and decided to open the tourist season with a Blackfeet blessing ceremony. In the future, if the Blackfeet tribe succeeds in opening a tribal national park, Mow says that he'd like to include it in the existing international peace park, the first of its kind, which currently encompasses Glacier and Canada's Waterton Lakes National Park. Source: Samantha Webber, [High Country News](#).
- *Glacier Bay NP* – The park has released its draft frontcountry management plan for public comment. It includes a planning vision and environmental assessment covering visitor experiences, services, and general operations in a planning area that encompasses 7,120 acres of scenic rainforest and coastal waters in Southeast Alaska, including Bartlett Cove. The frontcountry area supports core administrative facilities for the park and visitor services, including the Glacier Bay Lodge. The frontcountry is distinct from the backcountry areas of the park that encompass more than 2.6 million acres of designated wilderness. Comments will be accepted through May 8th at the [park's PEPC webpage](#). Source: National Parks Traveler. Source: Kurt Repanshek, [National Parks Traveler](#).
- *Golden Spike NHP* – The park is planning a three-day celebration of the 150th anniversary of the May 10, 1869 event at Promontory Summit in which the final spike was driven linking the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads, creating the country's first transcontinental railroad. Festivities are being organized by the Spike 150 Foundation. The Golden Spike Association will perform daily reenactments of the original ceremony throughout the celebration. More than 10,000 people are expected to attend the event. Tickets for the sesquicentennial celebration must be purchased in advance and are available online [at this link](#). Source: John O'Connell, [Idaho State Journal](#).
- *Grand Canyon NP* – A FONSI has been signed for a site plan to transform Desert View into an intertribal cultural heritage site. Over the past five years, the park has worked collaboratively with representatives from the Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians (representing five bands of Southern Paiute Indians), Havasupai, Hopi, Hualapai, Navajo, Zuni, and Yavapai-Apache tribes; the Grand Canyon Conservancy; the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association; the Bureau of Indian Affairs; and park concessioners to increase cultural demonstrations at Desert View and identify the necessary infrastructure needed to transform the area into a cultural heritage site. Under the plan, the park will work with the tribes "to create authentic, first-voice tribal interpretation and expand opportunities for cultural and educational programs including demonstrations, exhibits, and personal interactions with tribal representatives and artisans." Source: [National Park Traveler](#).

- *Lake Mead NRA* – The park has posted a minute-long video on YouTube that features all the park’s many wonders, “a place where the ordinary becomes extraordinary.” The intent is to show less-known areas beyond Lake Mead’s waters. It’s quite well done; [you can see it at this link](#).
- *Yosemite NP* – Management of Camp 4, a camp so renowned among climbers and tourists that it’s now on the National Register of Historic Places, will change this year. The park will be testing a daily lottery system this season to assign sites in the camp; it will go into effect on May 21st and run until September. Each lottery will open at 12:01 a.m. PDT the day before the intended arrival date and will remain open until 4:00 p.m. The system will work similarly to the park’s Half Dome daily lottery, with applicants automatically and randomly matched to open campsites. Each lottery application will carry a non-refundable fee yet to be determined. Lottery winners will then pay a \$6 fee per night to camp and can register up to 7 nights. [Click on this link](#) for additional details. Source: Adam Ruggiero, [Gear Junkie](#).

Federal Government

This section will return in the next issue.

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:

- *Worldwide Loss Of Forests Threatens Climate Solution* – “The world’s forests continue to disappear at an alarming rate, threatening a resource that scientists say is a crucial ‘natural solution’ for controlling climate change on an urgently short timescale,” reports *Inside Climate News*. “Last year, the planet saw its fourth-highest level of tropical tree loss since the early 2000s—about 30 million acres, according to a new analysis published [last] Thursday. Those losses have continued even as more corporations and countries made commitments to preserve forests, and as scientists emphasized that maintaining forests must be a global priority—as crucial to staving off the worst risks of climate change as cutting fossil fuel use. Forests absorb roughly a quarter of the carbon dioxide emitted by human activity each year. Destroying all of the world’s forests would release the same amount of stored carbon as burning all the planet’s readily extractable fossil fuel deposits...” You can read the statement issued by the Climate and Land Use Alliance [at this link](#). The authors of the forest assessment strongly recommend that the fate of forests be a major topic at the next round of international climate meetings, which include a UN Climate Action Summit in September and the 25th Conference of the Parties of the UN’s Framework Convention on Climate Change in December, and that stronger emphasis be placed on the [United Nations’ REDD+ program](#), under which developing countries can receive compensation for conserving forests. Source: Georgina Gustin, [Inside Climate News](#).
- *Climate Change Dramatically Depleting Fish Populations* – According to [a study on vulnerability of marine populations due to climate change](#) published on April 24th in *Nature: The International Journal Of Science*, sea creatures, especially those that live in shallower water near the coasts, are much more susceptible to population losses due to global warming than land animals. The scientists found that local populations of marine animals are disappearing at double the rate of land-based species. That’s because marine animals like fish, crabs and lobster are already more likely to be living near the threshold of life-threatening temperatures, and because there are fewer places to hide from extreme heat in the ocean, particularly its shallower areas. Said one of the researchers: “These results are stunning, in part because the

impacts of climate change on ocean life were virtually ignored just a decade ago." Source: Bob Berwyn, [Inside Climate News](#).

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:

- *Senators Seek Significant Funding For Carbon Capture Technology* – “A bipartisan group of senators is pushing for funding at the ‘highest possible levels’ for carbon capture technology development,” reported The Hill earlier this month. “The 12 lawmakers, including four Republicans, urged Senate appropriators to provide the Department of Energy with maximum funding for carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS).” In a key passage in their letter to the top senators on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, [which can be read at this link](#), the senators made this statement: “As the world transitions towards a carbon constrained economy, investment in CCUS technology will spur economic development and ensure energy security while protecting the environment from carbon dioxide emissions and maintaining global leadership role in research and development.” Source: Miranda Green, [The Hill](#).

National Park System Issues

Climate Change – News pertaining to the impacts of climate change on park lands, waters, species and other assets:

- *Hawaiian Coastal Parks* – Although the following article is about sea level rise at Waikiki, it is also germane to the four coastal parks the NPS has in Hawaii – Kalaupapa, Pu`uhonua O Hōnaunau, Pu`ukoholā Heiau and Kaloko-Honokōhau – and probably also applies to Pearl Harbor and coastal sections of Haleakala and Hawaii Volcanoes. “Hawaii’s iconic Waikiki Beach could soon be underwater as rising sea levels caused by climate change overtake its white sand beaches and bustling city streets,” reports the *Huffington Post*. “Predicting Honolulu will start experiencing frequent flooding within the next 15 to 20 years, state lawmakers are trying to pass legislation that would spend millions for a coastline protection program aimed at defending the city from regular tidal inundations. The highest tides of recent years have sent seawater flowing across Waikiki Beach and onto roads and sidewalks lining its main thoroughfare, and interactive maps of the Hawaiian Islands show that many parts of the state are expected to be hit by extensive flooding, coastal erosion and loss of infrastructure in coming decades.” Source: Caleb Jones, [Huffington Post](#).

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:

- *Katmai NP* – A recent move to protect brown bears while feeding at Brooks Falls may run afoul of the recent Supreme Court ruling that the NPS has no jurisdiction over Alaska’s navigable waters. The park is proposing to close a half-mile section of the Brooks River to motorboats upriver of a new park bridge, as they would disturb brown bears who concentrate at Brooks Falls to feed on salmon. A public meeting was to be held on April 24th to discuss the issue. Source: Suzanne Downing, [Must Read Alaska](#).
- *Cumberland Island NS* – A clutch of eggs found in the park last Friday marked the opening of loggerhead sea turtle nesting season and Georgia’s 31st year of comprehensive nest monitoring. Although the first nest was found in the park, loggerheads, Georgia’s leading marine turtle and a protected species, nest on all barrier islands in the state. The season will hit full stride by June. Predicting a season total is anyone’s guess, but biologists are hoping for more nests than last year’s 1,735. Source: [Savannah Morning News](#).

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

- *Big Thicket NP* – The park will launch a new feral pig trapping program on May 1st. Superintendent Wayne Prokopetz had this to say in announcing the program: “Hog management is an ongoing challenge throughout Southeast Texas. We hope that this new trapping program, paired with our existing public hunting opportunities and professional hog trapping efforts, will help diminish the impact this invasive species is having on our environment.” During this inaugural season, 25 permits will be issued to trap feral hogs in the preserve, which will be made available on a first-come, first served basis starting May 1st. Each permit holder will be allowed to set up one trap in an approved location in the preserve until the end of the season on January 31st. Source: [The Orange Leader](#).
- *Big Cypress NP* – Efforts to remove exotic pythons from the park hit a new benchmark this month with the capture of the largest such snake ever captured in the park. She was 17 feet long, weighed 140 pounds, and contained 73 developing eggs. Her capture was possible because of a new approach to finding pythons. Teams use male pythons attached with radio transmitters to find breeding females. Check out the article for a picture of the snake. Source: Cheryl McCloud, [Fort Myers News-Press](#).

Park People

DOI Alumni

Passing Of Secretary Manuel Luján

Former ten-term Congressman and Secretary of the Interior Manuel Luján Jr. died on Thursday, April 25th, at his home in Albuquerque. He was 90.

Luján mounted his first congressional campaign in 1968 at age 40, unseating the incumbent, Thomas Morris, and becoming the first Republican congressman from New Mexico since 1931. He held that position continuously for the next 20 years despite major demographic shifts in his constituency. He joined the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs in his first term and rose to become the ranking Republican member by 1981.

Before he could retire in 1988, having decided to forgo an 11th term, Luján was nominated by President-elect George H. W. Bush to be his secretary of the interior. He became the second Hispanic-American to serve in a cabinet, following in the footsteps of Lauro F. Cavazos Jr., who had only months earlier become secretary of education under President Ronald Reagan.

Although Luján was confirmed unanimously by the Senate in 1989, his hands-off approach to governance and eagerness to accommodate competing interests proved less popular in the wake of several national controversies. Within months of his confirmation, he was confronted by the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, which touched off an environmental crisis in Alaska. Although he helped oversee cleanup efforts and negotiate settlements with Exxon, he drew fire for simultaneously pushing ahead with proposals to open parts of California and Florida to offshore drilling.

He was also criticized for his skepticism about the Endangered Species Act and his hesitance to extend federal protection to the northern spotted owl, a test case in the larger debate over endangered species. In 1991, Luján was part of the so-called God Squad — a committee of cabinet officials tasked with deciding whether to allow logging in old-growth forests thought to be critical to the owl’s survival. Angering environmentalists, the committee voted to sell logging rights in some areas while placing other tracts off limits. A federal judge later overruled that decision.

While critics complained that Luján’s policies echoed the pro-business philosophy of such predecessors as James G. Watt and Donald P. Hodel, both of whom served under Reagan, Luján was considered more open to compromise. He was a good friend of Morris K. Udall, the liberal Democratic congressman and eminent preservationist, and the two worked closely together on the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, which Mr. Udall led starting in 1977.

As secretary, he also advised President Bush on reversing a number of Reagan-era policies seen as out of touch with modern environmental standards. The new policies included raising the fees that coal companies paid to mine on federal land, as well as those paid by concessionaires in federal parks, with some of the revenue returned to the park system.

“Interior is like a sack full of cats,” Luján said in 1990. “All those different interests, and you’re in the middle of that sack trying to keep everybody away from each other.”

Luján retired in 1993 after serving as interior secretary throughout the one-term Bush presidency. He expressed few regrets about leaving public life, finding the political climate overly contentious after a relatively quiet and productive congressional career.

At a talk he gave in Colorado in 2004, he made this comment about his time in DC: “I’ll tell you very honestly, I’m glad that I’m not in politics anymore.”

Source: Zach Montague, [New York Times](#).

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.

- *Grand Teton NP* – A 30-year-old California man was driving north in the park around 2:30 a.m. on April 26th when he struck a bison in his lane of travel about two miles south of Moran Junction. The bison landed on top of the vehicle, crushing the roof. The man suffered serious injuries and died at the scene. His wife and only passenger was asleep at the time of the accident. She was uninjured, partly because the car's airbags deployed. She reported the accident by cell phone, but had no idea where she was in the park. A Signal Mountain concession employee came upon the scene about ten minutes later and provided the Teton County dispatcher with the proper location. The couple had left Las Vegas, Nevada, at 1 p.m. on Monday and were driving straight through to Yellowstone. Submitted by Law Enforcement Specialist Colin Campbell.
- *Denali NP* – Two Alaska men were descending a technical ice and rock route on Mount Wake with a third person on April 24th when they fell approximately 1500 feet to their deaths. The two men were unroped at the time; one apparently fell and caused the second to fall. The third climber made her way safely to the bottom of the route on her own. The bodies were recovered that evening by another climbing party. Rangers were notified of the accident by radio on Monday afternoon. The bodies were evacuated, and an investigation was begun. The accident - which occurred about 15 miles from Mount McKinley - came as the climbing season begins in the park. Denali rangers and US Army helicopter crews placed the supplies for the seasonal ranger camp at the 14,200-foot level of McKinley on Monday afternoon. The first climbing patrol begins on May 1st. Submitted by PAO John Quinley.
- *Canyon de Chelly NM* – Just before 7 p.m. on April 29th, a young man put a shotgun to the face of a 47-year-old woman sitting in her car at the Spider Rock overlook and told her that he'd kill her and her nine-year-old son, the sole passenger in the vehicle, if she didn't "move over." The woman grabbed her purse, told her assailant that it contained everything she had, and shoved it at him; the man then ran off with another man. Navajo tribal police investigated and have detained two juveniles. The FBI may be brought into the investigation, as it now appears that the incident may have been a potential carjacking. Submitted by Regional Chief Ranger Tony Bonanno.

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- Issue Contributors: Bob Martin, Larry Hilaire

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

"We want to keep our American wilds, quite simply, because we are among the last industrial people who have had sustained contact with the kind of land we now call wilderness; it has been among us and within us, sometimes dominating our puny attempts at civilization, for as long as we have agreed to make a nation together. Love it, hate it, or ignore it, wilderness is in our American soul, and we are loath to give it up, or see it become so diminished, so vestigial, that it ceases to be what it has always been to us – those cussed, godforsaken, dangerous patches of outback full of things that can kill us. Carry water and use your wits."

Author Donald Snow in *Testimony: Writers of the West Speak On Behalf of Utah Wilderness*, 1996

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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."

To receive a copy of this free publication, join or support the Coalition:

- *Join* – Any current, retired or former salaried employee (GS, wage grade, seasonal, temporary, or SES) of the National Park Service can join the Coalition ([click on this link](#)).
- *Support* – If you never worked for the NPS, you can become a supporter ([click on this link](#)).

If you'd like to contact the Coalition regarding any particular issue or action, please use the form found on the Coalition web page ([click on this link](#)).

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