



## The Coalition Weekly Report Wednesday, May 8, 2019

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### Incidents

#### **Bryce Canyon NP Hiker Rescued Following Four Days Lost In Park**

On Friday, May 3rd, rangers and county SAR team members rescued an Idaho man who'd been lost in the park for four days without food or water.

Garfield County dispatchers received a call Thursday reporting that John Wiersema, 39, had been missing since Monday, and that he had planned to go hiking in Bryce Canyon. An interagency search was immediately begun, but Wiersema's vehicle was not found until Friday morning. A Utah DPS helicopter was then called in to assist.

Wiersema was found around 1 p.m. He was suffering from dehydration and minor scrapes and bruises and was taken to Garfield County Memorial Hospital for treatment.

Wiersema planned on taking a two-hour hike on the Swamp Canyon Trail but had somehow got lost. He had no food and only one bottle of water, but was able to drink from some streams. He was wearing only shorts and a shirt.

Source: Yvette Cruz, KSL, via [EastIdaho.com](http://EastIdaho.com).

#### **Hawaii Volcanoes NP Man Seriously Injured In Fall Into Kilauea**

A 32-year-old man was rescued by rangers and personnel from Hawai'i County Fire Department on the evening of May 1st after he fell into Kilauea's caldera and was seriously injured. The man fell from a 300-foot cliff after climbing over a permanent metal railing at the Steaming Bluff overlook to get closer to the edge.

Another visitor reported the fall. Search and rescue crews found him alive but seriously injured on a narrow ledge about 70 feet down from the cliff around 9 p.m.

The 32-year-old man, whose name has not been released, is an active duty soldier in the U.S. Army. His unit is on the island for field training at the Pohakuloa Training Area.

Source: Julio Jacobo, [ABC News](http://ABC News).

#### **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 of this intermittent Servicewide summary:

- *Ozark NSR* – Overnight storms dumped a half foot of rain or more on many parts of the Ozarks on May 1st, sending river levels soaring to dangerous flood levels. The park accordingly closed all of the Jacks Fork River and most of the Current River within the park to paddlers that morning, with the exception of the section from Tan Vat to Akers on the upper Current. The Alley Spring Campground was evacuated due to expected flooding, and hikers in backcountry campgrounds on the Jacks Fork were asked to evacuate due to rising water. As of the time of the report, no rescues had yet occurred. Source: Wes Johnson, [Springfield News-Leader](#).
- *Sequoia NP* – A winter of heavy snowfall has left the Lodgepole Campground buried under so much snow that park staff don't expect it to open for the season before May 22nd, and then not completely. The campground closure includes reservations, walk-ups, and the self-registration system that usually begins in April. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#).

## **National Park System**

### **Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents**

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

- *Grand Canyon NP* – Despite several fatal falls that have occurred in the park of late, reports *Insider*, “visitors to the Grand Canyon are still standing dangerously close to the edge of the landmark's rim...” The observations made by some of these visitors will not surprise anyone who's worked for the Service for any length of time: “Tourists at the park told NBC News that they didn't believe they were putting themselves in danger when they got close to the rim's edge. Instead, the tourists said they thought those who had fallen likely weren't paying attention or were acting risky near the edge. NBC reporters saw tourists attempt handstands, yoga poses, and more near the canyon's edge.” Source: Kelly McLaughlin, [Insider](#).
- *Grand Teton NP* – A previous issue of this newsletter contained a report about a hunter who killed a female wolf in the park that described the light sentence he got because he convinced investigators that he'd been hunting along the boundary and accidentally crossed into the park. An FOIA filed by the *Jackson Hole News & Guide* has revealed that he walked right past a boundary sign before shooting the wolf. Gros Ventre Wilderness Outfitters owner Brian Taylor was pursuing wolves with two other hunters during a period when the federal government was shut down and some rangers were furloughed. The article contains other details about the incident. Source: Mike Koshmrl, [Jackson Hole News and Guide](#).

## **National Fire Situation**

### **National Interagency Fire Center**

#### **Fire Activity Centers On Central And Southern States**

NIFC remains at PL 1. The National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) continues to issue weekly reports each Friday. As of last Friday, seven uncontained large fires were burning nationwide. Activity continued to center on the South and Midwest.

**NPS Fires** – Reports on NPS fires that appeared on the most recent NICC summary:

- *Everglades NP* – The 541-acre Osceola Fire was burning in tall grass and brush. It was 30% contained. Six engines, a helicopter, and 32 firefighters and overhead were committed.

**NPS/Interagency Fire News** – Stories pertaining to wildland fire and other incidents and fire-related activities that involved the NPS and its fellow agencies:

- *Redding Hotshots Injured In Rollover Accident* – Emergency personnel from numerous agencies responded on April 30th to a two-vehicle, major-injury traffic collision in Burney, California. The Redding Hotshots crew truck was involved in a rollover traffic collision with a second vehicle, later described as a gold Lexus. A mass casualty incident was declared and resources were brought in from around the region. The IC soon reported there were eleven victims, including one who was seriously injured and listed as “immediate” who needed to be airlifted, two other seriously injured victims who were listed as “delayed” who also potentially needed to be airlifted or transported, and eight additional victims with minor injuries. All were taken to area hospitals. The cause of the accident has not yet been determined. The following article contains several images of the damaged vehicles. Source: Trevor Montgomery, [Shasta County News](#).
- *Burned Area In Great Basin NP Reopens* – A section of the park that has been closed for three years due to facility damage reopened last Wednesday. Visitors are being allowed back into the Strawberry Creek area for the first time since the summer of 2016. Though the area will be open for hiking and other day-use activities, it will likely remain closed to camping for several more years while the park seeks funding to rebuild the restrooms and camp sites. The Strawberry Creek Campground had undergone about \$2 million in renovations a few years before the fire. The lightning-sparked blaze also wiped out more than a decade’s worth of stream restoration work aimed at returning endangered Bonneville cutthroat trout to the watershed. Dead and hazardous trees, which killed a USFS hotshot crew member during the fire, also remain a safety risk. Source: Henry Brean, [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#).

### Current Incident Resource Commitments

Category	April 19th	April 26th	May 3rd
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	2	5
Engines	9	19	29
Helicopters	1	1	2
Total FF/Overhead	60	189	259

### Fires/Acreage

Category	2019 Total	2008-2018 Ave	2019 Variance
Year-to-Date Fires	10,625	18,654	- 8,029
Year-to-Date Acres	211,923	945,678	- 733,755

Source: [National Interagency Fire Center](#).

### 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

**April 16** – The president signed into law, H.R. 2030, to direct the Secretary of the Interior to execute and carry out agreements concerning Colorado River Drought Contingency Management and Operations (Public Law 116–14).

### **Senate Actions**

**April 30** - By a vote of 90 yeas to 8 nays, the Senate confirmed the nomination of R. Clarke Cooper, of Florida, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Political-Military Affairs). Clarke was the Assistant Director, Legislative and Congressional Affairs for the National Park Service for the first couple of years of the administration of President George W. Bush in the early 2000s.

**May 1** – The Senate agreed to S. Res. 180, expressing the sense of the Senate that, during Public Service Recognition Week, public servants should be commended for their dedication and continued service to the United States.

**May 2** – The Senate passed S. 693, to amend title 36, United States Code, to require that the POW/MIA flag be displayed on all days that the flag of the United States is displayed on certain Federal property.

**May 2** – The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held a hearing to examine the nominations of Daniel Habib Jorjani, of Kentucky, to be Solicitor, and Mark Lee Greenblatt, of Maryland, to be Inspector General, both of the Department of the Interior, after the nominees testified and answered questions in their own behalf.

### **House Actions**

**April 30** – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held a hearing entitled “Public Lands and our Clean Energy Future”. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at this hearing.

**April 30** – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing entitled “No Road Map, No Destination, No Justification: The Implementation and Impacts of the Reorganization of the Department of the Interior”. Testimony was heard from Scott Cameron, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget, Department of the Interior; and public witnesses.

**April 30** – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands held a hearing on:

- H.R. 642, to reauthorize appropriations through FY 2026 for the Oil Region National Heritage Area.
- H.R. 1049, to authorize a National Heritage Area program.
- H.R. 1990, to reauthorize appropriations through FY 2026 for the National Aviation Heritage Area.
- H.R. 2288, to increase the ceiling on appropriations for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor from \$12 million to \$14 million.

P. Daniel Smith, Deputy Director, National Park Service, was the witness for the Department of the Interior. The department opposed extending the reauthorizations for the Oil Region and National Aviation Heritage Areas and the ceiling for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor – both in order to focus resources on the NPS deferred maintenance backlog – and asked the committee to defer action on the National Heritage Area program legislation in order to develop amendments to address the department’s concerns.

**April 30** – The Committee on Oversight and Reform Subcommittee on Environment held a hearing entitled “Climate Change, Part II: The Public Health Effects”. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

**May 1** – The Committee on Natural Resources approved, among other bills, the following:

- H.R. 255, to provide for an exchange of land between the Forest Service and San Bernardino County, California of a portion of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.
- H.R. 315, to revise the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program which restores land and water adversely impacted by surface coal mines that were abandoned before August 3, 1977.
- H.R. 434, to require the secretary of the interior to study the proposed Emancipation National Historic Trail, extending approximately 51 miles from Galveston, Texas, to Freedmen’s Town and Emancipation Park in Houston, Texas, following the migration route taken by newly freed slaves and other persons of African descent from the major 19th century seaport town of Galveston to the burgeoning community of Freedmen’s Town, located in the 4th Ward of Houston, Texas. As introduced, the bill would have required the study to be completed within one year of the enactment of the bill, and then, regardless of the results of the study, would have required the designation of the Emancipation National Historic Trail as part of the National Trails System upon receipt by Congress of the study. The committee removed the automatic designation of the trail from the bill.
- H.R. 1014, to amend the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act to apply to territories of the United States, to establish offshore wind lease sale requirements, and to provide dedicated funding for coral reef conservation.

**May 1** – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife held a hearing entitled “The State of Fisheries”. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

**May 2** – The House passed H.R. 9, to direct the President to develop a plan for the United States to meet its nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement. The bill passed by a vote of 231 ayes to 190 noes.

## **National Park Service**

### **National Park System**

**National Parks vs. Theme Parks: NPS Is Outright Winner** – “Americans are more likely to consider visiting a U.S. national park as a vacation option than a theme park, according to an April 2019 National Park Awareness Survey, conducted by L.A.-based special interest news network PASHpost,” reports PR Newswire. “While 78% of respondents put a higher premium on vacationing at a national park than a U.S. theme park, 97% of those surveyed believe America's national parks hold an important place in the country's cultural legacy, worthy of maintaining. The survey was conducted among Americans age 18+ in recognition of National Park Week, the presidentially proclaimed week beginning April 20 through April 28.” Source: PR Newswire via [Finance.Yahoo.com](https://finance.yahoo.com).

**Group Of People Who’ve Visited All NPS Sites Gets New Member** – The exclusive club of people who’ve visited every area in the system just got a new member. According to *Gear Junkie*, Mikah Meyer, 33, just became the youngest person to visit all 419 sites and the only one to do it in a single, continuous push. Meyer did it all over the course of three years, driving 70,000 miles in the process. Add boat, train, and airplane rides, and he traveled more than 200,000 miles to complete the mission. Meyer began his journey on April 29, 2016, at the Washington Monument; on April 29, 2019, along with family and friends he met along the way, he finished by walking from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial. Source: Patrice La Vigne, [Gear Junkie](https://gearjunkie.com).

### **Around The Parks**

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

- *Appalachian NST* – Researchers from Virginia Tech’s Center for Geospatial Information Technology are developing technology that they hope will improve both the science and practice

of protecting trail resources for the long-term health of the trail. A team of researchers recently showed off one of these new systems to representatives from the NPS and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy – a viewshed simulation inside a Viscube that uses digital models of the trail and surrounding landmarks created with LIDAR data and 3D prints that can be utilized for public outreach and geographic relief. Source: Robby Korth, [The Daily Progress](#).

- *Biscayne NP* – Underwater archaeologists with the National Park Service are searching park waters for the remains of a ship called the *Guerrero* that was carrying slaves to the Americas. The *Guerrero* was a pirate slave ship that was carrying 561 enslaved Africans across from Africa in 1827. Although slavery was legal in the United States, both the U.S. and England had banned transporting them. A British warship called the *Nimble* spotted the *Guerrero*; a gun battle ensued, during which both ships ran aground and the *Guerrero* eventually sank. The NPS divers and the other researchers started out with about a thousand linear miles to search; they've covered about half that so far, and are now checking out a number of "anomalies" found by an underwater metal detector. The article includes a four-minute-long video of the search for the ship. Source: [NBC CT Investigates](#).
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* – The rehabilitation and renovation of the historic Flat Top Manor House, home of noted [philanthropist and conservationist Moses Cone](#), will take a big step this year with planned exterior renovations set to begin this fall. In November, the park and the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, a nonprofit fundraising group, announced a \$722,000 federal grant to help fund these projects. Complete installation of fire alarm and suppression systems should be completed by July. Rehabilitation of the retaining walls throughout the estate and resurfacing the Watkins and Black Bottom carriage trails and continue maintenance of the remaining carriage trails are going to be ongoing projects throughout 2019. Source: Thomas Sherrill, [Watauga Democrat](#).
- *Buffalo NR* – Visitors to some of the park's remoter areas may soon be greeted by two quarter horses that the park recently purchased from the Arkansas Department of Correction to revitalize its horse-mounted patrol program. The horses, named Nacho and Cinco, will be used for backcountry patrols and search and rescue operations in remote areas of the park like the Ponca Wilderness and Lower Buffalo Wilderness, where vehicular access is non-existent and on-foot emergency response is inefficient. Source: [Newton County Times](#).
- *Gateway Arch NP* – The Arch has fallen into darkness, at least temporarily. There have been problems with the lights that make it glow at night and the park has been working on the problem every day for weeks, trying to get answers. The problem with the new LED lights started several weeks ago. Even if they're soon fixed, they will be turned off for two weeks in May as they always are for birds that are migrating along the river. Source: Molly Rose, [KLPR News](#).
- *Glen Canyon NRA* – NPS archeologists are in the process of investigating what may be a major find – old Spanish coins that may date from the time of the conquistadors and possibly earlier. The coins were found near the Halls Crossing Marina last September by a hiker from Colorado. NPS archeologists are trying to determine if they are real, and, if so, what they're doing in southern Utah. The hiker found them lying on the ground and took them home, thinking maybe they were medallions from wine bottles or something equally modern. A little research revealed that they were Spanish coins; he promptly notified the park and turned them over to the Service. No word yet on the outcome of the NPS investigation. Source: [KSL News](#).
- *Grand Teton NP/Yellowstone NP* – Although this story is not specific to either park, it's relevant to both. On April 24th, Jackson Hole Airport issued a solicitation for businesses that would be able to maintain some type of bear spray rental vending machine or kiosk in the terminal building. The main goal of providing such a service would be to cut down on the 300 to 400 bear spray canisters that are confiscated from air travelers passing through security checkpoints during a typical summer season. It would provide a means for putting these unused, undamaged cans back into the system, said an airport official, and get them to others



who might need them. At least one other airport, Montana's Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport, offers a similar service due to its proximity to grizzly territory. Rental services might boost currently abysmal bear spray carry rates in places like Grand Teton and Yellowstone. A 2015 Yellowstone study found that fewer than 1% of boardwalk users carried the device, and the usage rate rose only to 13% for day hikers. Overnight backpackers and horse packers carried spray at a higher rate. Bear spray typically retails for \$40 to \$60, depending on the make and size of the canister. Over the past few years several rental services have sprung up in northwest Wyoming, including the Bear Aware store in Canyon in Yellowstone. Daily rental rates there are \$9.50, and a week rental costs \$28. Source: Mike Koshmrl, [Jackson Hole News and Guide](#).

- *Mammoth Cave NP* – The park is currently seeking local comments on several upcoming projects to improve its concessions facilities. They include construction of new family cabins, improving parking and site access around the Lodge at Mammoth Cave, repair and replacement of the roof and façade improvements to the main lodge building of The Lodge at Mammoth Cave, refinishing and upgrading of historic Woodland Cottages, and electrical upgrade of historic hotel cottages. After collecting and reviewing comments on all of the projects, the park will release a draft EA specific to the construction of family cabins and the parking lot realignment for The Lodge. These two projects will then be released for additional comments via PEPC. Source: [Glasgow Daily Times](#).
- *Mount Rushmore NP* – On Earth Day, Xanterra, the park's concessioner, unveiled a number of upgrades that will make the park more friendly environmentally. The most significant is what the company calls the Thomas Jefferson Sun Canopy, the state's second-largest solar installation. Planning and construction of the canopy, which cost \$1 million, took three years. It has been in operation since January and is expected to provide more than half the electricity used by the restaurant and gift shop. The canopy will also reduce Xanterra's greenhouse gas emissions by 24 percent. For Mount Rushmore's visitors and their vehicles, the canopy offers shade and protection from sun, wind, rain and hail on the upper level of the parking structure. Source: Tanya Manus, [Rapid City Journal](#).
- *Vicksburg NMP* – The Friends of the Vicksburg National Military Park and Campaign have begun a fundraising campaign to repair the park's 111-year-old Rhode Island Memorial, which was damaged by an FE2 tornado that hit the park on April 13th. The memorial honors the 7th Rhode Island Infantry, the only regiment from the state that participated in the Vicksburg Campaign, and includes a bronze statue depicting an infantryman who has picked up the fallen colors. The tornado lifted it off its base and it now lies on the ground behind the memorial. Plans are to have workers from the Service's Historic Preservation Training Center in Maryland make the repairs. Source: John Surratt, [Vicksburg Post](#).
- *War in the Pacific NHP* – On May 2nd, the U.S. Mint held a ceremony launching the new War in the Pacific National Historical Park quarter – the 48th release in the Mint's America the Beautiful Quarters program, a 12-year initiative that honors 56 national parks and other national sites authorized by Public Law 110-456. Each year until 2020, the public will see five new national sites depicted on the reverse (tail side) of America the Beautiful quarters. A final coin will be released in 2021. The United States Mint is issuing these quarters in the order in which the national sites were officially established. Source: [Sierra Sun Times](#).
- *Yellowstone NP* – A portion of the abandoned Oregon Short Line railroad will be resurrected to once again carry park visitors, albeit by bike or on foot. The Forest Service recently announced approval of a nine-mile section of non-motorized, multi-use path along the old rail bed between West Yellowstone and Reas Pass at the Montana-Idaho border. Work on the trail will begin this summer, including rest stops with picnic tables and benches. This trail may eventually become part of a planned 104-mile route called the Greater Yellowstone Rail Trail that would connect the park to Jackson, Wyoming. A 30-mile portion of the old rail line was converted into the Ashton-Tetonia Trail in Idaho in 2010. Source: Brett French, [Billings Gazette](#).

- *Yosemite NP* – Attorneys battling it out over a trademark dispute at Yosemite now report they're making "significant progress" toward a peaceful resolution. While Delaware North operated concessions in the park, it trademarked several prominent Yosemite-related names, including "The Ahwahnee," "Badger Pass," "Wawona" and "Curry Village." After losing the Yosemite concessions contract, Delaware North sued the government in September 2015, looking for compensation for its intellectual property. In a court filing on April 25th, government lawyers joined with representatives of Delaware North in advising the judge overseeing the case that further legal pains might be unnecessary because "the parties have made significant progress in their settlement discussions." Stay tuned for further developments. Source: Michael Doyle, [E&E News](#).

## **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**

**Administration Defunds FWS Conservation Cooperatives** – This just in from the Union Of Concerned Scientists: "Scientists and officials from the US Fish and Wildlife Service have shared confidential information with the *Guardian*, revealing that the Trump administration – seemingly against the wishes of Congress – has defunded Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs), research centers across the country which provide invaluable science capacity and technical expertise to big picture issues such as climate change, flooding, and species extinction. Only 6 of the 22 research centers are operational now, and the operational 6 centers are functioning primarily due to external funding sources. By defunding these research centers and forcing most of them to close, the administration is depriving scientists, decision-makers, and the public from the rich scientific research and collaboration opportunities generated by one of the most successful conservation programs in the country." A public affairs specialist at FWS confirmed with the *Pacific Standard Magazine* that capacity and funding for LCCs have been practically eliminated, saying that the agency no longer provides dedicated staff, administrative functions, and funding for the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, but adding that the research centers will still be asked to 'support efforts to gather data, identify and pursue science tools, and form and engage partnerships to address shared conservation priorities' for the 21st century... The Trump administration's decision to slash the funding earmarked by Congress to LCCs is a chilling example of how the administration continues a pattern of shuttering or severely defunding federal programs that promote basic scientific research." Source: [Union Of Concerned Scientists](#).

### **Department of the Interior**

**The New Adventures Of Secretary Bernhardt** – Scant weeks after Ryan Zinke lowered his personal flag from the roof of DOI and headed west, thereby terminating this publication's long-running series on his adventures and misadventures in the District, his successor has begun providing enough material for similar coverage:

- *House Launches Bernhardt Investigation* – Natural Resources Committee Chair Raúl M. Grijalva (D-AZ) and Water, Oceans, & Wildlife Subcommittee Chair Rep. Jared Huffman (D-CA) have launched an inquiry seeking documents associated with Bernhardt and California's powerful Westlands Water District, a former client of Bernhardt's. "Serious questions have been raised in filings with the Inspector General and the Office of Government Ethics regarding the conflicts between his work as a lobbyist and lawyer for the irrigation district and now as a top official in the Trump administration," said Grijalva and Huffman in a press release. The inquiry comes in the wake of new details released by the *New York Times* revealing that Bernhardt continued to associate with the water district at least until his deputy secretary nomination on April 28, 2017. Within four months of his confirmation as Deputy Secretary of the Interior



Deputy, Bernhardt pushed for a decision that would be beneficial for his former client. Source: Dan Bacher, *Central Valley Independent*.

- *NARA Investigates Missing Bernhardt Calendars* – According to a letter obtained by *Politico*, the National Archives and Records Administration has asked Interior to address allegations that have been raised that the secretary may have destroyed his official calendars. “The letter adds new pressure to a department that is facing investigations by House Democrats who question whether Bernhardt has violated federal record-keeping laws,” reports *Politico*. “Bernhardt's existing daily schedule shows that the former fossil fuel and agriculture lobbyist has met with representatives of former clients who stood to gain from Interior’s decisions, but the department has released few details about his activities during about one-third of his days in office. House Oversight Chairman Elijah Cummings (D-MD) requested the NARA probe after Bernhardt acknowledged he does not keep a daily calendar and failed to disclose meetings with industry groups such as the American Petroleum Institute. ‘This record raises questions about whether all of the Acting Secretary's meetings are being captured and preserved in accordance with DOI's record schedules,’ Cummings wrote in a previously undisclosed March 19 letter to NARA.” Details about whom Bernhardt met with or what he was working on are still missing for 133 of the 374 work days between when he started as deputy secretary in August 2017 and this past January. Source: Ben Lefebvre and Annie Snider, [Politico](#).
- *Former Bernhardt Lobbying Firm’s DOI Business Quadruples* – There’s no indication that the following has anything to do with the previous two entries, but it does raise eyebrows: “The law and lobbying firm that previously employed President Trump’s pick to run the Interior Department saw a surge in revenue from clients hoping to influence the agency after he left for its upper ranks in 2017,” reports the *Washington Post*. “Over the past three years, according to federal records, acting interior secretary David Bernhardt’s former firm Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck has quadrupled its business related to Interior. In 2018, two dozen clients paid BHFS a total of \$4.8 million to lobby Interior, according to data compiled from a lobbying database maintained by the Senate. During the previous year, when Bernhardt left the firm to join the Trump administration as deputy secretary, it collected a total of \$3.5 million in Interior-related revenue. By comparison, the firm’s total income to lobby Interior in 2016 was \$1.2 million. During all but one year going back to 2009, BHFS’s Interior-related revenue never broke seven figures.” Source: Dino Grandoni and Juliet Eilperin, [Washington Post](#).
- *Bernhardt Renames Yellowstone (Not)* – The secretary may be able to justify himself before Congress and NARA, but can he blow off *The Onion*? That publication has reported shocking news: “Accusing the media of reading too far into the many signs featuring the flavored tortilla chips that are now installed in the park, [then] acting United States secretary of the interior David Bernhardt categorically denied that business interests had influenced Yellowstone National Park’s name change to Frito Lay Presents Doritos Flamin’ Hot Nacho National Park....” For more, including a shot of the new park entrance sign, see the following. Source: [The Onion](#).

## **House and Senate**

**Congress Challenges DOI Reorganization Plan** – As noted in the Congressional update above, the House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing on April 30th entitled “No Road Map, No Destination, No Justification: The Implementation and Impacts of the Reorganization of the Department of the Interior.” *Government Executive* provided this summary in its edition of the same date: “An Interior Department official on Tuesday declined to share with House lawmakers a document detailing the Trump administration’s reorganization plan for the Interior Department, as a subcommittee chairman had demanded. The 14-month-old plan remains a general vision that the department’s political appointees praise as an efficiency tool to make it easier for stakeholders to do ‘one-stop shopping’ business with the government. Critics deride it as a resource-draining, morale-crushing “solution in search of a problem.... Rep. TJ Cox, D-Calif., chair of the Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation, grilled Interior’s point man on the reorganization during a hearing Tuesday, noting that his panel had received only a one-page document despite multiple requests for details on what he called a ‘massive reorganization plan’ for which there are no timelines or cost-benefit analyses....The \$60 million the department plans to spend

on the reorganization, while ignoring reorganization techniques recommended by the Government Accountability Office, Cox added, could have been used for water projects in central California, or to reduce the department's backlog of Freedom of Information Act requests. Instead, the impact has been to move Senior Executive Service employees into positions for which they are not qualified, for reasons that 'are either punitive or based on ideology,' Cox said, noting that 90 percent of Interior's employees are already outside of Washington. The result is low morale for the department's 70,000 employees and a departure of many with institutional knowledge, the lawmaker said." DOI's point person for the project, Scott Cameron, said that he remained enthusiastic about the plan, but declined to provide details, adding that "he couldn't speak to the legal or practical reasons why the document remains under wraps." Source: Charles S. Clark, [Government Executive](#).

## **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:

- *Report Imminent On Rapid Decline Of Natural World* – Next month, representatives of 130 governments will be presented with a definitive new global synthesis of the state of nature, ecosystems and nature's contributions to people – the first such report since the landmark *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment* was published in 2005 and the first ever that is intergovernmental. "The study from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform On Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), expected to run to over 8,000 pages, is being compiled by more than 500 experts in 50 countries," reports the *Huffington Post*. "It is the greatest attempt yet to assess the state of life on Earth and will show how tens of thousands of species are at high risk of extinction, how countries are using nature at a rate that far exceeds its ability to renew itself, and how nature's ability to contribute food and fresh water to a growing human population is being compromised in every region on earth." Said Sir Robert Watson, chair of IPBES: "The loss of species, ecosystems and genetic diversity is already a global and generational threat to human well-being. Protecting the invaluable contributions of nature to people will be the defining challenge of decades to come. Policies, efforts and actions – at every level - will only succeed, however, when based on the best knowledge and evidence. This is what the IPBES Global Assessment provides." Sources: [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#) and John Vidal, [Huffington Post](#).
- *Study Finds Fungus Causing Major Depredations To Amphibians Worldwide* – An [international study](#) recently published in *Science* has determined that a fungal disease called chytridiomycosis has caused dramatic population declines in more than 500 amphibian species – mostly frogs, but also toads and salamanders – including 90 extinctions. Over the past 50 years, the deadly disease, which eats away at the skin of amphibians, has completely wiped out some species, while causing more sporadic deaths among other species. The researchers say that globalization and wildlife trade are the main causes of this global pandemic and are enabling the spread of disease to continue. "It's the greatest recorded loss of biodiversity attributable to a disease," said the report's lead researcher. Source: Eleanor Imster, [EarthSky](#).

**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:

- *Renewable Generation Overtakes Coal As Energy Source* – Renewable energy likely hit a milestone in the United States in April, with the renewable sources projected to produce more electricity than coal for the first time ever. It showed up in the Energy Information Administration's Short Term Energy Outlook, issued early last month. This was trumpeted as a

“momentous transition” in a blog post from the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA). Renewable power systems — led by hydro, wind and solar — were projected to generate 2,322 gigawatt-hours per day in April, while coal-fired power plants were projected to generate 1,997 gigawatt-hours per day. Both renewables and coal trailed natural gas, projected to generate 3,388 gigawatt-hours per day. Source: [Clean Economy Weekly](#).

- *UK Parliament Declares Climate Change Emergency* – On May 1st, *Deutsche Welle*, a German publication commonly known as “DW,” reported that the UK has finally moved – if somewhat symbolically – to take climate change seriously: “After a week and a half of protests in London by climate change activists, the British Parliament has declared a symbolic ‘environment and climate change emergency.’ Lawmakers backed a call by Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the opposition Labour Party, for ‘rapid and dramatic action’ to protect the environment. The non-binding motion calls on Prime Minister Theresa May’s government to make proposals to Parliament in the next six months to ‘restore the UK’s natural environment and to deliver a circular, zero waste economy.’ The measure was passed as an opposition motion, using a procedure the ruling party typically ignores, and has no direct consequences for policy.” Last month, climate change activists from the Extinction Rebellion protest group held 11 days of protests in central London. The demonstrations caused road closures and paralyzed the London Underground transit system. The movement has also spread to Germany and other European countries. Source: [Deutsche Welle](#).
- *House Votes To Keep US In Climate Agreement* – “The House passed a bill on Thursday (H.R. 9) that would block President Trump from abandoning the Paris Agreement on climate change and require his administration to devise a plan to cut America’s greenhouse gas emissions,” reported the *New York Times* on May 3rd. “The measure, which passed 231-190, was the first big global warming legislation to win congressional approval in almost 10 years. It stands virtually no chance of approval in the Republican-controlled Senate. But with the vote, Democrats sought to tie Republicans to Mr. Trump, who has said that climate change is a hoax, and isolate them on an issue they believe is resonating strongly with voters. Three Republicans voted in favor. No Democrats opposed it.” Source: Lisa Friedman, [New York Times](#).

## **National Park System Issues**

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

- *Lake Mead NRA* – There’s good news this year concerning snowpack runoff into the Colorado River. Regional hydrologists and water managers recently reported a very productive year for snowfall in the western mountain states, which means that water levels in key Colorado River reservoirs will remain above crisis level for at least another year or two. Said a BuRec official: “This is one of the best years we have had since the drought started back in the year 2000.” It has been what weather experts call a year of “El Nino.” That means that unusually warm water temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean have been sending waves of storms across the southwestern United States, causing snowpack levels around 130 percent of normal across the western mountain region. Nonetheless, Lake Mead will still be below normal this year because it was such an unusually dry year in 2018 and the system still has to make up for it. The park developed a new low water management plan this past winter that provides guidance on actions to be taken should water levels drop from 1,050 feet to 950 feet in elevation. Said Lake Mead’s Christie Vanover: “With projections as they were, we thought that we might be in that range as soon as next year. But now it seems that won’t be so soon. We might be able to hold off for another year or two.” Source: V. Robinson, [Moapa Valley Progress](#).

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

- *Western Parks* – According to a recent report by the National Interagency Fire Center, most of the country can expect a normal wildfire season, but residents along the West Coast should be

ready for another busy season. A heavy crop of grasses and fine fuels has developed across California and should elevate fire potential as it dries through the summer. The Pacific Northwest has entered a period of moderate drought, which could mean an early fire season in the Cascade Range and the Okanogan region. The potential for significant wildfires is above normal west of the Cascade crest in Washington and Oregon through August. Nicholas Geranios, [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:

- *Death Valley NP* – One of the world's rarest fish species, the Devils Hole pupfish, has reached a population of 136 observable fish. This high spring season population count follows years of substantially lower spring population counts, which triggered concerns over the chances of survival of this critically endangered fish. In the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, scientists counted about 200 Devils Hole pupfish in the annual spring season surveys. There was a startling decline in fish numbers starting in the late 1990s. Biologists were extremely concerned when less than 40 fish were counted in the spring seasons of 2006, 2007, and 2013. The fall 2018 count and spring 2019 counts have been the highest in about 15 and 16 years, respectively. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#).
- *Glacier NP* – A project is about to begin to restore native species of trout to the park. A century ago, once-fishless Camas Lake and Lake Evangeline were stocked with non-native Yellowstone cutthroat trout. Nearly a century later, trout species native to the park and its environs face a variety of threats, ranging from hybridization with or competition from non-native species to the impacts of climate change on water temperature and spawning beds. The park will be undertaking a project to boost the prospects of survival for native west-slope cutthroat trout and bull trout, both inside the park and in drainages of the North Fork of the Flathead River. The project will hinge on the use of rotenone, a fish toxicant, to rid Camas Lake, Lake Evangeline and a stretch of Camas Creek above Arrow Lake of the non-native trout. Eventually, native west-slope cutthroat trout and bull trout will be added to the lakes and creek. Source: Duncan Adams, [Daily Inter Lake](#).
- *Hawaii Volcanoes NP* – The recovery of the endangered nene goose, also known as nēnē and Hawaiian goose, continues. A section of the park including the Pu'u Pua'i Overlook, parking lot and Devastation Trail reopened last Thursday after a four-month temporary closure to protect breeding and nesting nene. Only 30 nene remained statewide in 1952. The park began efforts to recover the imperiled species in the 1970s, and there are now more than 200 birds residing there. Source: [Hawaii Tribune-Herald](#).

**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:

- *Everglades NP* – Last month, a group of federal, state and non-profit officials gathered in Fort Lauderdale to launch an interagency python management plan. It's hoped that such a blueprint for python control, which has been talked about since at least 2016, will increase agency coordination, share successes in removing the rapidly propagating invasive, and expand these efforts to all of South Florida and its myriad landowners. Burmese pythons, which one of the meeting attendees called an "all terrain eating machine," were first reported in the Everglades in 2000. Native to Asia, the Burmese python is considered one of the largest snakes in the world. It was likely introduced into the Everglades by accident or intentional releases by pet owners. While not venomous, "the giant constrictors have thrived, assuming a top position on the food web." Source: Kimberly Miller, [Palm Beach Post](#).

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

- *Gateway NRA* – The first phase of efforts by the park and Corps of Engineers to clean up a heavily contaminated 237-acre of the park has been completed. It involved taking samples from

the site to determine the location of contaminated sites. The next phase, says COE, will focus on “adequately characterizing the nature and extent of contamination and evaluating risk to human health and the environment,” as required by CERCLA. Over the period between 2009 and 2018, Gateway received \$14 million from the DOI hazmat fund to support the project. Source: Kristin F. Dalton, [Staten Island Advance](#).

- *Lake Mead NRA* – A Nevada wildlife researcher has found mercury in the feathers of peregrine falcons within the park, indicating that it provides no refuge from such contamination in peregrines. Over the past decade, Joe Barnes, a biologist with Nevada’s Department of Wildlife, has tested for mercury in 700 individual peregrines in southern Nevada, Washington, Maryland and the Gulf Coast of Texas. Every one of them was affected. More research is needed to determine how much mercury peregrine falcons can tolerate, but studies of other raptors suggest concentrations of between 5 and 15 parts per million can significantly reduce breeding. Barnes documented average mercury levels of 17 ppm in adult peregrines at Lake Mead. Source: [ABC News](#).
- *Dinosaur NM* – Efforts continue to combat the worldwide problem of light pollution via the designation and protection of those remaining areas with dark skies. Dinosaur is the newest national park to be added to the list. It has been designated an International Dark Sky Park, meaning the nighttime overhead views have “an exceptional quality of natural darkness,” according to an announcement by the monument and the International Dark Sky Association. The designation also means people working at the monument have made efforts to reduce artificial evening light and preserve dark views. Other NPS areas in Utah on the list are Canyonlands, Cedar Breaks, Hovenweep, Natural Bridges, and Rainbow Bridge. Source: Sean P. Means, [Salt Lake Tribune](#).

## **The Coalition**

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

- *Friends Group Blog* – The Coalition has launched a new blog on its website called “Focus on Friends” that will highlight the stories of park friends groups. It can be found [at this link](#). As you’ll see, it includes a form that you can use to send along information on a friends group that you know about whose work should be highlighted.

Source: Emily Thompson, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator.

## **Park People**

### **NPS Alumni Passing Of “Cal” Calabrese**

Dr. Francis “Cal” Calabrese, 76, former chief of the Midwest Archeological Center, died at his home in Omaha on April 25th.

Cal was born and raised in Waterbury, Connecticut. He received his BA in anthropology from the University of Colorado and his masters and doctorate in anthropology from the University of Missouri. His research contributions and publications spanned subjects pertaining to Southwestern, Southeastern, Central and Northern Plains prehistory. He had a long and accomplished career with the NPS, including many years as chief of the Midwest Archeology Center.

Cal enjoyed lake, coastal and ocean sailing and sailed catamarans competitively. He spent four years sailing in the Bahamas and Caribbean with his wife. He traveled extensively in the United States and around the world. He appreciated well-designed cars and motorcycles and was an avid pilot, flying both for his work and for pleasure. He loved the outdoors and was an accomplished downhill skier.



He is survived by his wife Linda and by many nieces, nephews and cousins. A celebration of his life will be held at 3 p.m. on Saturday, June 15th, at 13024 Calhoun Road in Omaha. Refreshments will be served; dress will be very casual: "Cal" casual.

Memorial donations may be made to the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks, 201 I Street #805, Washington, DC 20002 ([www.protectnps.org/donate](http://www.protectnps.org/donate), 520-615-9417). You can sign the funeral home guest book [at this link](#).

Source: [Korisko Larkin Staskiewicz Funeral Home](#)

### **NPS Alumni Death Of Don Fore**

Retired Mount Rainier East District maintenance foreman Don Fore died of cancer at his home in Raymond, Washington, on April 30th. No details have come out yet on a memorial service, but it's expected to be in Raymond on May 11th.

"Don was a friend to many of us who passed through the Wooden Arch gateways of Mount Rainier to serve a wonderful tenure midst the forests, glaciers and rivers of The Mountain," writes Larry Henderson." RIP to our friend Donald Dexter Fore, and thanks for your friendship and significant contributions to park operations over the decades."

Source: Member Larry Henderson.

### **National Park Service Recent NPS Management Changes**

Here's a listing of recent personnel changes in the NPS. Click on the links following the brief summaries for additional details:

- *Grand Canyon NP* – Olympic National Park Superintendent Sarah Creachbaum is serving as acting superintendent at Grand Canyon. Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park Superintendent Woody Smeck also will be tapped to fill in until a replacement is found for Christine Lehnertz. Lee Taylor will be acting super at Olympic while Creachbaum is at Grand Canyon. Source: Felicia Fonseca, [Peninsula Daily News](#).
- *Klondike Gold Rush NHP* – Jordan Neumann is the park's new chief ranger. Neumann has worked at nearly a dozen national parks over the course of his career, beginning at Yosemite. Source: Claire Stremple, [KHNS News](#).
- *Steamtown NHS* – Cherie Shepherd has been selected as the park's new superintendent. Shepherd, who will begin her new assignment in June, replaces Deborah Conway, who is now deputy regional director for Northeast Region. Source: John Harlan Warren, [Steamtown NHS](#).

### **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.

- *New River Gorge NR* – Rangers received reports of nine car clouting incidents in the Fern Creek and Fayette Station areas of the park over a three-month period in spring, 1994. All of the vehicles belonged to out of state rock climbers, and almost \$5,000 worth of climbing and camping equipment was taken from them. The culprits also caused about \$2,000 damage in smashed windows; in two cases, almost all of the vehicle's windows were shattered. During the evening of April 23rd, a "bait" vehicle was set up in the Fern Creek parking area, and surveillance of the location was begun. Rangers observed a vehicle entering the lot at 3 a.m.



the following morning, and two men were subsequently apprehended while in the act of siphoning gasoline from one of the vehicles. They were interviewed and led investigators to a third man. Rangers utilized information provided by one of the first two men to obtain a search warrant for the third man's residence and vehicle. During a consent search, they found climbing gear and audio tapes identified from the car clouts. Confessions were obtained from the third man regarding five separate car clouting incidents in the Fern Creek lot; two other individuals were implicated in the break-ins. Rangers are working with the U.S. attorney's office to obtain indictments. The incident is still under investigation. Submitted by District Ranger Rick Brown.

- *Grand Canyon NP* – At 9:30 p.m. on April 30th, backcountry rangers received a report that a 48-year-old hiker had suffered a serious fall on the Blue Springs route. The steep and exposed route is located along the Little Colorado River, 32 miles southeast of the park's East Entrance Station. The woman had fallen off a fifty foot dry waterfall while traversing near the edge, but had survived the fall, partly because she landed on her external frame pack. She suffered compound wrist and humerus fractures and several avulsions and lacerations. At the request of the county sheriff's department, a rescue team of three rangers drove to the trailhead by four-wheel drive vehicle, but was unable to descend the route in the dark due to the hazardous terrain. Rescue operations resumed at first light the next morning when the park's helicopter arrived from the South Rim with a short haul rescue team. Two IEMT park medics were short hauled to the patient and were able to stabilize her injuries. She was then lifted to a landing zone on the rim, transferred to an air rescue helicopter, and taken to the Flagstaff Medical Center for treatment. Submitted by Chief Ranger Ken Phillips.
- *Denali NP* – The NPS has taken action against two men for conducting illegal guide services on Mount McKinley [now Denali]. The first, a 32-year-old man from Talkeetna, registered to take two clients to the West Buttress, though he had limited experience in high-altitude expeditions and his clients had no mountaineering experience. The citation, issued on May 1st, alleges that the would-be guide, who had no permit to lead commercial trips, was receiving compensation for heading up the expedition. The clients, both physicians from Georgia, returned home without climbing the mountain. In an unrelated incident the same day, a 32-year-old German man was also found to be illegally running a commercial operation. Rangers found that the man, through a company called Amical, had advertised extensively and had coached his clients on what to say if questioned. He admitted to rangers that he was the paid guide for the group, and was turned over to federal Immigration and Naturalization Service officials. He spent the night in jail, then returned to Germany. His clients included some very experienced mountaineers; they were permitted to continue their McKinley trip. Submitted by Public Affairs Officer John Quinley.

## Acknowledgements

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

- Editor: Bill Halainen
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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

"It cannot be escaped that environmental management to perpetuate the nation's park and recreation lands provides the action crucible for public involvement in the larger across-the-land environmental reform movement...Only if the public sees the nation's park and recreation lands as the first line of defense against general environmental decay, gets involved at the action level to save them, and begins to see the local, regional, and national implications in such saving - only then will environmental communications begin to mean something."

William E. Brown, *Islands of Hope: Parks and Recreation in Environmental Crisis*, 1971

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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:

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- *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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