



The Coalition Weekly Report Wednesday, May 22, 2019

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Incidents

Denali NP&P Injured Climber Rescued From Denali

Mountaineering rangers, assisted by the park's helicopter, performed a short-haul rescue of an injured climber from Windy Corner on Denali's West Buttress route on the night of Sunday, May 12th.

One member of a two-person climbing team had suffered traumatic injuries in a snowboarding fall while descending Windy Corner on the afternoon of Wednesday, May 8th. The teammates were equipped with an InReach device and a satellite phone and were able to immediately report the incident and their location to the park communication center. Extreme pain and concern for internal injuries required the two climbers to set up a camp at Windy Corner, a feature at 13,500 feet on Denali named for its high winds and known for rock fall hazards.

An NPS ranger patrol camped at 11,000 feet attempted to reach the party that evening, but high winds and poor visibility forced them to turn around. On Thursday, although weather improved lower on the mountain, high winds prevailed at Windy Corner. The park's high altitude helicopter was able to fly over the incident site, but sustained winds over 30 mph precluded a rescue.

A storm settled on the mountain on Friday and Saturday, with cloud cover and strong winds. Rangers learned via satellite phone that the injured climber was stable and that the pair had adequate food and fuel to ride out the storm for several days. On Saturday, a ranger and volunteer nurse from the NPS patrol at 11,000 feet reached the party, performed a medical assessment, and provided them with supplies in the event the storm continued much longer.

The weather finally improved on Sunday afternoon. The NPS ranger patrol from 11,000-foot camp reached Windy Corner and splinted and prepared the injured climber for an air evacuation. The two climbers, each with an attending ranger, were short-hauled off the mountain and flown back to Talkeetna for further care.

The 2019 Denali mountaineering season is in its early stages, with only 166 climbers currently on the mountain. The first NPS ranger patrol of the season reached the 14,200-foot camp late Sunday night, shortly after assisting with the short-haul evacuation at Windy Corner. No mountaineers have reported reaching the summits of either Denali or Mount Foraker.

Source: Maureen Gualtieri, [Denali NP&P](#).

Joshua Tree NP Searchers Find Missing Hiker

Deno Ndilula, a 31-year-old Namibian national who'd become separated from his hiking companion on Wednesday, May 15th, was found alive and well on Thursday afternoon.

A search was launched that day by rangers, JOSAR (the park's SAR team), and personnel from the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department. The search was called off after sundown and renewed again Thursday morning around 6 am.

Ndilula contacted campers on Thursday morning. They drove him to a restaurant in Twentynine Palms, where he was met by members of the search team. When they arrived, they found him enjoying his first meal in some time.

Agencies who participated the park in the search were California Highway Patrol, San Bernardino Sheriff's Department, San Bernardino County Search and Rescue and Joshua Tree National Park Search and Rescue.

Source: George Land, [Joshua Tree NP](#).

Manzanar NHS Visitor Reports Illegal Metal Detecting, Arrest Follows

Shortly before 4 p.m. on Saturday, April 16th, a visitor stopped at the front desk and reported seeing someone in the park with a metal detector. The visitor was able to describe the car and provide the license plate number.

Manzanar rangers called the Inyo County Sheriff's Office and a deputy and a California Department of Fish and Wildlife warden arrived within minutes and detained him. Rangers from Death Valley are investigating and looking into criminal charges.

Source: Bernadette Johnson, [Manzanar NHS](#).

Point Reyes NS Fisherman Dies After Waders Fill

On the morning of May 4th, Ki Chun Kim, 74, was apparently digging for crabs alone on South Beach with his back to the water when he was overcome by a wave. Friends returning to the beach from the parking lot saw him floating face down in the surf. Paramedics were unable to revive him.

Kim was wearing bib-style fishing waders which filled with water and made it impossible for him to get back to shore.

Autopsy results are pending. The incident remains under investigation by the sheriff's department, the coroner's division and the National Park Service.

Source: [Marin Independent Journal](#).

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:

- *Rocky Mountain NP* – This past winter dropped “a staggering amount of snow” on the park's higher elevations – enough to nearly cover the Alpine Visitor Center and Trail Ridge Store (elevation 11,796 feet), which snowplow drivers finally reached this past week. The following article has a photo of the very top of the VC poking through the snow and a comparative image of how it normally looks. Source: Louis Amestoy, [Greely Tribune](#).

- *Yosemite NP* – Due to incoming winter storm systems, Glacier Point Road was closed to all vehicular traffic last Wednesday and was to remain closed through at least Sunday. The storms were produced by [atmospheric rivers](#) that the National Weather Service said would drop from 150 to 200 percent of precipitation normal for the month of May. Plowing this year has been unusually challenging due to the amount of snow that fell on the Sierras this past winter. In late April, the California Department of Transportation released a video with drone footage of its road crews plowing snow just outside the park that shows what a harrowing job it can be. [Click on this link](#) to see the video of crews working east of the Tioga Pass entrance, which sits at an elevation of 9,943 feet. Sources: [CNN](#) and the [Huffington Post](#).

National Park System

Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents

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

- *Appalachian NST* – The murder of a hiker and serious stabbing of his companion that occurred on the trail on May 11th (see the last issue) has drawn considerable attention nationwide. Here are a few of the stories that have appeared: A May 14th [Washington Post article](#) identified the murder victim as Ronald S. Sanchez Jr., 43, of Oklahoma, and provided additional details on the attack. A [CNN story](#) on May 15th described Sanchez' PTSD and depression following his service in the Army and told how he relieved that stress by hiking and engaging in other outdoor activities. And two Roanoke stations added more information on the incident – a [WGHL report](#) on the 14th focused on a statement on the attack made by Suzanne Dixon, president of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and a [WSLS story](#) on May 13th reported on the court appearance of James Jordan, the accused murderer, and cited information from court documents about the case.
- *Joshua Tree NP* – Last year, a report appeared in this newsletter about two people – Ashlie Stapp of Joshua Tree and Marine Corps 1st Lt. Curtis Lee Krueger of Twentynine Palms – being charged with the murder of Henry Stange, then being released while the case underwent further review. Krueger was subsequently rearrested and charged with Stange's murder last December. Last month, Stapp was rearrested and charged with being an accessory in the murder; she confessed to helping Krueger bury the body. Investigators believe Krueger beat Stange to near-death in Stange's garage. The murder evidently stemmed from a love triangle. Source: [Valley News](#).

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center

Fire Activity Remains Light Nationwide

NIFC remains at PL 1. The National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) has not yet gone to daily reporting; rather, weekly summaries are issued each Friday. Fire activity remained minimal across most of the United States last week, with just two new large fires reported – one each in Florida and New Mexico.

Current NPS Fires – Reports on NPS fires that appear on the NICC summary:

- *Big Cypress NP* – The Thick Root Fire had burned 528 acres as of last Friday (no change from the previous week's report). It was 60% contained. A total of 20 firefighters and overhead were committed.

NPS/Interagency Fire News – Stories pertaining to wildland fire and fire-related activities that involved the NPS and its fellow agencies. Please note that stories that focus on the effects of climate change on fire appear under the wildland fire heading in the climate change impacts section below.

- *Efforts To Improve Fire Shelters Unsuccessful* – Despite five years of research, efforts to provide wildland firefighters with a more effective fire shelter have failed. Many firefighters have used the shelters successfully, but others have been killed inside them. The Forest Service conducted an exhaustive search of materials and designs, working with 23 different entities, including NASA, to produce hundreds of different materials and combinations. The researchers were unable to find an alternative that offered less weight/less bulk with similar protection or similar weight and bulk with more protection. Furthermore, past shelter deployments show that the vast majority of firefighters are able to deploy their shelters in locations that are predominantly exposed to only radiant heat. The current shelter performs very well in radiant heat exposure. For specifics on the research, see the following. Source: Bill Gabbert, [Wildfire Today](#).
- *Whiskeytown Continues Recovery From Carr Fire* – On May 15th, the *San Francisco Chronicle* ran an update on the status of the park’s recovery from last year’s Carr Fire, which burned 93% of Whiskeytown’s 42,000 acres. Here’s an excerpt: “The national park that was devoured in an inferno last summer is reopening step-by-step this spring and will be back on the map for Memorial Day weekend. As [last] week started, Whiskeytown Lake was full with clear water and sprinkled with boats. On the west shore, freshly budded oaks and other spring growth have brought the Brandy Creek Peninsula to life, and rangers hope to reopen the area in time for Memorial Day. At Oak Bottom last weekend, campgrounds and day-use parking nearly filled... Some of the hills surrounding the lakes look like they have been scraped clean, burned to the soil. Above the lake, many canyons and ridges are filled with blackened tree skeletons that [stretch] for miles and rise high to the horizon. Amid the burn in some spots, a light veneer of green from fresh grass on the forest floor gives hope for the eventual rebirth of the land.” Source: Tom Stienstra, [San Francisco Chronicle](#).

Current Incident Resource Commitments

Category	May 3rd	May 10th	May 17th
Area Command Teams	0	0	0
NIMO Teams	0	0	0
Type 1 Teams	0	0	0
Type 2 Teams	0	2	1
Crews	2	11	4
Engines	19	29	2
Helicopters	1	7	4
Total FF/Overhead	189	417	160

Fires/Acreage

Category	2019 Total	2008-2018 Ave	2019 Variance
Year-to-Date Fires	12,567	22,752	- 10,185
Year-to-Date Acres	226,078	1,089,366	- 863,288

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

Nothing to report.

Senate Actions

May 13 – The nomination of Robert Wallace of Wyoming to be assistant secretary for fish and wildlife and parks at the Department of the Interior was transmitted to the Senate.

May 14 – The Committee on the Budget held a hearing to examine fixing a broken budget and spending process, focusing on the perspectives of two former chairmen after receiving testimony from former Senators Judd Gregg and Kent Conrad.

May 14 – The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining held a hearing on the following, among other bills:

- S. 434, to provide for a report on the total federal acreage and maintenance costs of federal land holdings under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior.
- S. 499, 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.
- S. 1079, to provide for the withdrawal and protection of certain federal land in the state of New Mexico surrounding Chaco Culture National Historical Park.

Michael Nedd, deputy director for operations for BLM, was the witness for the Department of the Interior. Nedd testified that it was premature to take a position on S. 1079 due to an incomplete BLM planning process for the Chaco Culture area, including its obligations under the National Historic Preservation Act. He also said it is the top priority of the administration to develop energy resources on public lands and there needs to be an appropriate balance between energy development and other values associated with public lands.

May 15 – The chair made the following announcement: The President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, have appointed Dr. Phillip Swagel as director of the Congressional Budget Office, effective June 3, 2019 for a term expiring on January 3, 2023.

May 15 – The Committee on Environment and Public Works held an oversight hearing to examine the Council on Environmental Quality after receiving testimony from Mary B. Neumayr, the council's chair.

May 15 – The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs approved the following business items, among other bills:

- S. 1275, to require the collection of voluntary feedback on services provided by agencies.
- S. 1420, to improve the effectiveness of major rules in accomplishing their regulatory objectives by promoting retrospective review.
- H.R. 1079, to require the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to issue guidance on electronic consent forms.
- H.R. 1654, to amend title 44, United States Code, to modernize the Federal Register.
- The nomination of Dale Cabaniss of Virginia to be director of the Office of Personnel Management.

House Actions

May 15 – The chair announced the joint appointment by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate of Dr. Phillip Swagel as director of the Congressional Budget Office for the term expiring January 3, 2023.

May 15 – The Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies held a markup on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, FY 2020. The bill was forwarded to the full committee without amendment. As approved by the subcommittee, the bill includes \$3.39 billion for the National Park Service, \$168 million above the fiscal year 2019 enacted level and \$649 million above the President’s budget request. Within this amount, the bill appropriates the following (listed by account):

- \$2.65 billion for Operation of the National Park System, \$144 million above the fiscal year 2019 enacted level and \$221 million above the President’s budget request. This increase includes funding for 500 new staff at park units.
- \$74 million for National Recreation and Preservation, \$9 million above the fiscal year 2019 enacted level and \$41 million above the President’s budget request.
- \$122 million for the Historic Preservation Fund, \$19 million above the fiscal year 2019 enacted level and \$89 million above the President’s budget request. Within this amount, the bill includes \$67 million for State and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, \$16 million for Save America’s Treasures grants, \$23 million for competitive grants to preserve the sites and stories of underrepresented community civil rights, and \$10 million for grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities.
- \$319.7 million for Construction, which is \$45 million less than the FY 2019 enacted level, but \$73.4 million above the President’s budget request.
- \$208.4 million for Land Acquisition, with \$140 for the state grant program, \$15 million for American Battlefield Protection grants, and the remainder for federal land acquisition and acquisition management.
- \$20 million for the Centennial Challenge program.

The bill includes the following:

- Sec. 119, extensions for national heritage areas: (a) National Aviation Heritage Area, OH – extends the authorization of appropriations for the heritage area through September 30, 2022; (b) Oil Region National Heritage Area, PA – extends the authorization of appropriations for the heritage area through September 30, 2022; (c) The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor, CT and MA – increases the authorization of appropriations from \$15 million to \$17 million; (d) South Carolina National Heritage Area, SC – increases the authorization of appropriations from \$15 million to \$17 million; (e) Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, NY – increases the authorization of appropriations from \$12 million to \$14 million.
- Sec. 422, an extension of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act authority to collect fees on public lands through September 30, 2021.
- Sec. 423, detailed requirements for assessments charged by federal agencies covered in the bill, land exchanges valued over \$500,000; and guidelines for reprogramming of funds.

May 15 – The Committee on Natural Resources held a hearing entitled “U.S. Department of the Interior Budget and Policy Priorities for FY 2020.” Testimony was heard from Secretary Bernhardt.

May 15 – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands held a hearing entitled “Examining the Impacts of Climate Change on Public Lands Recreation” There were no witnesses from federal agencies at this hearing.

May 15 – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife held a hearing on H.R. 2532, the “Tribal Heritage and Grizzly Bear Protection Act.” There were no witnesses from federal agencies at this hearing.

May 16 – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held a hearing entitled “Oil and Gas Development: Impacts of Water Pollution Above and Below Ground.” There were no witnesses from federal agencies at this hearing.

National Park Service

National Park System

New Requirements For Commercial Tour Operators – Effective October 1st, tour operators will be required to obtain commercial use authorization permits and submit end-of-year management reports to the NPS. The new policies also require tour operators to pay three fees per park – a CUA application fee (\$300 per park annually), per-person entrance fees where applicable, and a management report fee (\$5 per visitor they brought into parks for the year). When charged a per-person entrance fee, tour operators will not be required to pay the \$5 per-person management fee. Instead, the Service will allocate that amount from the entrance fees paid. Most national parks have not required tour CUAs or permit fees in the past, and few have required management fees, so these new requirements will require significant changes to operators visiting multiple national parks. The article, which appears in a tourist trade publication, was written by the International Inbound Travel Association and also includes concerns that the IITA has with this new policy. Source: [Leisure Group Travel](#).

NPS Accessibility Task Force – The April issue of *Roadtrippers* has an article on efforts to improve accessibility in the national parks (state parks are also mentioned). It focuses on the Service's Accessibility Task Force, formed in 2012, which is working toward assuring "that all members of our visiting public are afforded access to our significant sites and the stories within." The ATF's five-year plan, which began in 2015, is focusing on the lack of accessible restrooms, entrances and parking lots, the need for accessible water fountains in some park visitor centers, and the removal of accessibility challenges at trails, campgrounds, and beaches. Source: Alexandra Charitan, [Roadtrippers](#).

Briefly Noted – A summary of shorter articles on issues relating to the Service. As always, further information is available at the source link at the end of each entry:

- *Becoming A Ranger* – *Outside* magazine's webpage has an article entitled "How to Become a Park Ranger." It consists of a series of nine tips "on how to get one of the most enviable jobs in the outdoor industry." They all sound pretty familiar but nonetheless provide good guidance to wannabe rangers. Source: Joe Jackson, [Outside](#).
- *NPS And AR/VR* – *FedTech* magazine's May 10th issue includes a piece on the use of augmented reality/virtual reality (AR/VR) technology by the Army and the National Park Service. It highlights the partnership between the Service and TimeLooper, a virtual reality platform creator, in developing VR options for visitors at sites that are partly or entirely closed for renovations or other reasons. Source: Erin Brereton, [FedTech](#).
- *NPS 2019 Police Week Video* – [An eight-minute-long video](#) has been posted on YouTube that commemorates all of the rangers and USPP officers who've fallen in the line of duty over the Service's history, with images of most of them. Source: [YouTube](#).

Around The Parks

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

- *Cape Cod NS* – Summer's almost here and that means swimmers, seals and sharks along the cape's coast. There's considerable apprehension about the impact that last year's shark attack fatality will have on visitation to the cape this year, particularly because the resurgent of the seal population has led to an increase in sharks in the area. Although attacks on humans are rare, authorities are stepping up emergency response efforts for the summer, aided by funding from the state. The park is adding more emergency-call boxes to make up for spotty cellphone service, upgrading signage to warn swimmers about sharks, and distributing safety kits with tourniquets to help treat traumatic bleeding. "The job of lifeguarding itself has completely changed," said one long-time park lifeguard. "We've gone from *Baywatch* to *M*A*S*H*." Source: Jon Kamp, [Wall Street Journal](#).

- *Death Valley NP* – The Service has purchased several hundred acres of private land on seven tracts located within the park’s borders. The tracts were acquired from the Mojave Desert Land Trust, which purchases land from willing sellers for conservation purposes. LWCF funds were used for the acquisitions. The parcels are in the Owlshead Mountains (two parcels, 320 acres), Panamint Mountains (55 acres), near Panamint Springs (160 acres), Saline Valley (80 acres), Marble Canyon (20 acres), and Black Mountains (36 acres). Source: Abby Wines and Jessica Dacey, [Death Valley NP](#).
- *Great Basin NP* – You may recall a story from five years ago regarding a 137-year-old rifle that was discovered leaning up against a park tree – and had evidently been there for most of that time. The rifle, dubbed “the forgotten Winchester,” is now on permanent display in the park’s VC. It’s housed in a case designed to simulate the way it looked when park archaeologist Eva Jensen stumbled across it in the hills above Strawberry Creek in 2014. News of its discovery made headlines around the world and sparked ongoing speculation about its past. There’s been no luck in finding out who owned the rifle or why it was left there, but researchers have determined that it was manufactured in February 1882 and shipped from Winchester’s factory in New Haven, Connecticut, in June 1882. No sales or ownership records have been found. Based on its condition, experts believe the Winchester Model 1873 might have been abandoned in the forest more than century ago. Source: Henry Brean, [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#).
- *Mount Rainier NP* – The 79-room annex to the Paradise Inn reopened last Friday after a \$25 million renovation. The building, which is almost a century old and accounts for more than half of the hotel rooms in the park, had been closed for 19 months. Workers brought the building up to seismic code, fixed spots where the foundation had sunk, installed new fire safety systems, and upgraded the building’s electrical and plumbing systems (the last time the electrical system was upgraded was during the Eisenhower administration). Source: Associated Press via [KOMO News](#).
- *Mount Rushmore NM* – *Newsweek* was among many media outlets to report on the upcoming (2020) return of fireworks to the park on the Fourth of July. Fireworks displays were held at the park between 1998 and 2009, but were stopped due to fears that they might cause a fire in trees killed by a pine beetle infestation. According to a statement from the South Dakota governor’s office, the decision came after months of meetings and discussions, which added that “the forest has gained strength and advancements in pyrotechnics allow for a safe fireworks display.” Said Governor Kristi Noem: “There is no more fitting place in all the nation to celebrate our democracy than from Mount Rushmore. We are grateful to President Trump and Interior Secretary Bernhardt for helping us make this happen.” Source: Kashmira Gander, [Newsweek](#).
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* – Here’s the latest on the annual Fourth of July celebration on the Mall – or, rather, celebrations. As you may have heard, the president has announced that he will be hosting an event that day called “A Salute To America” near the Lincoln Memorial, which was to be held there in the evening. This created an interesting situation, as “A Capitol Fourth,” the televised event that has been around since 1981 and is watched by millions nationwide, would be going on at the same time at the other end of the Mall. Not to worry, says the NPS: “While the details of [the A Salute to America] program have not yet been announced by the White House, we do not anticipate conflicts or overlap with any of the day’s other scheduled events, including the National Independence Day Parade, A Capitol Fourth, or the fireworks show.” Stay tuned for developments. Source: Margaret Barthel, [WAMU](#).
- *Olympic NP* – NPCA has filed a lawsuit in federal court against the Department of the Navy for repeatedly withholding information regarding its jet training activities over the park. This action is a result of the Navy’s failure to fully respond to numerous public information requests from NPCA under the Freedom of Information Act. NPCA initially submitted the FOIA request back in 2016 to determine the impacts of the Navy’s training exercises over one of the quietest places in the lower 48 states. NPCA is seeking information to provide thorough and thoughtful responses during the public comment period for the Navy’s draft SEIS regarding training

exercises over the park. Said NPCA's Northwest rep: "We recognize the Navy's training needs, but also value the importance of preserving natural sights and sounds for visitors and wildlife at one of the quietest places in America, the Hoh Rain Forest in Olympic National Park." Source: [NPCA](#).

- *Statue of Liberty NM* – The park's new 26,000-square-foot museum opened last Thursday, providing a home for the statue's original torch and other artifacts that had previously been in a smaller museum space inside the statue's pedestal. The new space, located somewhat away from the entrance to the statue, is open to anyone who visits Liberty Island, with the admission charge included in the price of the ferry ticket. From the outside, the glass walls and copper-colored roof appear to be rising out of the earth, with a giant staircase rising to a rooftop terrace at the center. The entire structure is meant to connect to Lady Liberty, using the same granite that's part of the statue pedestal and including copper to echo the material used in the statue. Source: Deepti Hajela, Associated Press, via [Allentown Morning Call](#).
- *Yellowstone NP* – Ledge Geyser, one of the biggest in the Norris Geyser Basin, has roared back to life after three years of quiet, shooting hot water at an angle up to 125 feet high and a distance of 220 feet. The geyser is famously noisy; according to a park geologist, it's because its water and steam must pass through a narrow opening in the ground. Source: Associated Press via [WTOP](#).
- *Yosemite NP* – Several magazines (including *Popular Mechanics*, *Science* and *Business Insider*) have recently run stories on the chronic problem of visitor safety at Half Dome. All are based on a [study](#) published by the journal *Wilderness & Environmental Medicine*. Here's an excerpt from the third of the noted magazines: "[Although Half Dome] has become one of Yosemite's most iconic symbols, it's also one of the most dangerous hikes in the U.S. From 2005 to 2015, Half Dome's perilous climb has prompted at least 140 search-and-rescue missions, 290 accidents, and 12 deaths (this excludes data from 2010, when the park issued a new permit system)... Before 2010, Yosemite authorities believed that the deaths were likely caused by overcrowding on the summit. On peak days, as many as 1,200 hikers could be found attempting the steep climb. To control for Half Dome's popularity, the National Park Service implemented a rule in 2010 that allows only 300 hikers on the summit per day." The assumption was that – for a variety of reasons – fewer people would equate to fewer accidents. Study researchers, though, found no evidence that the permitting system had reduced the number of deaths, accidents, or search-and-rescue missions. They conclude that the safety issue is probably not related to either crowding or weather and propose an alternate theory: "Because Half Dome limits the number of hikers on the mountain, people who receive a permit might view it as their 'one chance, to attempt the climb, which could encourage risk-taking or push people to continue climbing even when they no longer feel safe." Source: [Business Insider](#).

Federal Government

This section will return in the next edition.

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:

- *Atmospheric CO2 Hits Highest Level In Three Million Years* – On May 11th, sensors at the Mauna Loa Observatory in Hawaii registered concentrations of carbon dioxide at 415 parts per million (ppm). The last time levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide were this high was during the

Pliocene Epoch, which extended from about 5.3 million to 2.6 million years ago. During that period, average sea levels were about 50 feet higher than they are today and forests grew as far north as the Arctic. Source: Denise Chow, [NBC News](#).

- *Invasion Of The European Earthworms* – Just when you thought you'd heard about every possible form of environmental degradation comes this news from the *New York Times*: “Native earthworms disappeared from most of northern North America 10,000 years ago, during the ice age. Now invasive earthworm species from southern Europe — survivors of that frozen epoch, and introduced to this continent by European settlers centuries ago — are making their way through northern forests, their spread hastened by roads, timber and petroleum activity, tire treads, boats, anglers and even gardeners. As the worms feed, they release into the atmosphere much of the carbon stored in the forest floor. Climate scientists are worried. ‘Earthworms are yet another factor that can affect the carbon balance,’ Werner Kurz, a researcher with the Canadian Forest Service in Victoria, British Columbia, wrote in an email. His fear is that the growing incursion of earthworms — not just in North America, but also in northern Europe and Russia — could convert the boreal forest, now a powerful global carbon sponge, into a carbon spout. Moreover, the threat is still so new to boreal forests that scientists don’t yet know how to calculate what the earthworms’ carbon effect will be, or when it will appear.” Source: Alanna Mitchell, [New York Times](#).

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:

- *States Continue To Override Feds On Environmental Issues* – “More than a dozen states are moving to strengthen environmental protections to combat a range of issues from climate change to water pollution,” reported the *Washington Post* on May 19th, “opening a widening rift between stringent state policies and the Trump administration’s deregulatory agenda.” States “aren’t waiting for the Trump administration on environmental protections,” but are taking action on an array of issues, including mitigation of the impacts of climate change, stronger clean air and clean water standards, stronger chemical and pesticide regulations, and tougher standards on vehicle emissions. Source: Brady Dennis and Juliet Eilperin, [Washington Post](#).

National Park System Issues

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:

- *Yellowstone NP* – The massive die-off of trees in and around the park due to the pine bark beetle infestation is having a serious impact on grizzlies. “As warmer winters allowed the beetles to spread and devastate the whitebark pines,” reports *Inside Climate News*, “the bears have been increasingly wandering out of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem’s high-altitude forests and into more human environments, and they are dying in greater numbers than they have in decades, federal data show. Government officials say the population is stable. But over the past four years, the number of grizzly bear deaths has risen, the majority of them because the bears became a threat to people or livestock and were euthanized. Almost 250 bears have died over that period in the ecosystem, a swath of land larger than the state of West Virginia that comprises parts of Wyoming, Montana and Idaho.” See the article for details on causes and consequences. Source: Johnathan Hettinger, [Inside Climate News](#).
- *Point Reyes NS* – Rangers are looking for the owner of an off-leash dog that attacked and killed a threatened Guadalupe seal pup in an area of the park closed to dogs. The seal, less than a year old, was attacked in a snowy plover nesting site on North Beach that’s closed to dogs through September to help protect the threatened birds. The incident occurred on April 22nd. A park visitor saw the dog attack and called the Marine Mammal Center in Sausalito. By the time wildlife crews arrived the seal was dead. Source: Adrian Rodriguez, [Marin Independent-Journal](#).

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

- *Statue of Liberty NM/Ellis Island NM* – On May 1st, the *New York Times* ran a story on the site’s overcrowding: “A proliferation of tour groups has set off pedestrian gridlock inside the statue and its sister site, the Ellis Island National Museum of Immigration, which together receive a combined 4.5 million visitors a year. It has gotten so bad that the National Park Service, which runs both sites, is taking a dramatic step. Starting in mid-May, the agency is banning organized tours to the statue’s popular outdoor observation deck and to the Ellis Island museum. A surge in commercial tours has resulted in the need to alleviate ‘the mounting overcrowding and conflicts with National Park Service programming and operations in the interior spaces on both islands,’ said Jerry Willis, a spokesman for the agency. ‘It has severely degraded the visitor experience in the park.’” There’s another problem as well, said Willis – “the issue of tour guides behaving badly — from loud talking and altercations with other tour leaders, to hogging prime exhibit spaces and giving incorrect information...” You can imagine the tour guides’ response, which is also captured in the article. Source: Corey Kilgannon, [New York Times](#).

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

- *Systemwide* – The headline in the May 7th *USA Today* read as follows: “Harder to breathe: Haze, unhealthy air choking US national parks, study finds.” [A new NPCA report](#) has concluded that the vast majority of the 417 parks the study examined – 96% – are suffering from significant air pollution issues in at least one of the four categories that was the focus of the study. Among the findings: 85% of national parks have air that is unhealthy to breathe at times; 89% percent suffer from haze pollution; 88% have soils and waters affected by air pollution, affecting sensitive species and habitats; and 80% are feeling "significant" effects from climate change. Source: Ledyard King, [USA Today](#).

The Coalition

Summary of recent developments within the Coalition, including some of the actions that CNPCA took on your behalf, with links to each:

- *NPS Funding* – The Coalition has submitted testimony on the FY20 Interior appropriations bill and has also issued a statement on the House Appropriations draft FY20 appropriations for the NPS. [Click here](#) for the former; [click here](#) for the latter.
- *World Heritage Program* – The Coalition cosigned a letter to Congress expressing support for the United States remaining robustly engaged in and supportive of the World Heritage Program. [Click here](#).
- *LWCF* – Board member Mike Murray wrote an op-ed piece for the *Portland Press Herald* and participated in an interview with the Public News Service about the critical importance of LWCF in the state of Maine. [Click here](#) for the former; [click here](#) for the latter.
- *Oversight of DOI* – Member Scot McElveen wrote an op-ed piece for the Grand Junction Daily Sentinel on the importance of Colorado Senator Cory Gardner “work to provide real oversight of the Interior Department so that David Bernhardt’s former clients and special interests are not put ahead of protecting our nation’s public lands.” [Click here](#).

Source: Emily Thompson, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator.

Park People

NPS Alumni

Passing Of Richard Holder

Richard Holder passed away on May 8th in Arvada, Colorado. He and his wife, Shirley, had lived in that city since 1972.

Richard was born on September 3, 1929 in St. Paul, Minnesota. When he was a child, his family moved often, as his father worked for the Army Corp of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation supervising the construction of dams during the 1930's and 1940's. He graduated from high school in Imperial, Nebraska, in 1947 and received a bachelor of science degree in biology from Colorado Agricultural College (now Colorado State University) in 1951. He married Shirley Skewes before his last semester in college.

After a summer job with the USFS manning a fire watchtower in Oregon, Richard enlisted in the Air Force. He served during the Korean War in a number of stateside bases, where he reached the rank of lieutenant.

Richard loved the outdoors and all aspects of nature, particularly the management of wildlife. He had spent most of his teenage years tromping through fields in Nebraska and hunting rabbits, game birds, and deer. A family visit to Yellowstone National Park when he was ten years old inspired a dream to become a park ranger. This dream came true in 1956, when he was hired by the National Park Service. He worked as a ranger at Blue Ridge Parkway, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, and, ultimately, in Yellowstone National Park. Richard's duties there included wildlife management, law enforcement and wildland firefighting. He became an expert at capturing bears that were not getting along well with humans and transporting them to more isolated areas of Yellowstone.

Upon leaving Yellowstone, Richard participated in a year-long course on park management in Washington, D.C. He then became superintendent of Scotts Bluff National Monument. Besides managing that park, he facilitated the designation of Agate Fossil Beds National Monument.

In 1968, Richard accepted a management position in Southeast Regional Office in Richmond, Virginia. Four years later, he transferred to the Service's newly created Denver Service Center, where he finished out his career. The family moved to Arvada, where he and his wife Shirley have lived ever since. In Denver he undertook a number of planning assignments to improve a wide variety of NPS units in Southeast Region. These assignments culminated in a two-year tour of duty to Saudi Arabia, where he assisted officials of that country in creating their own national park system.

Richard retired from his government position in 1980. He spent his retirement years hunting with his son, Steve, fishing and camping with his granddaughter, Kinsey, chopping wood, and traveling the world with his wife, Shirley. The two of them took almost yearly cruises and traveled to all five continents. They very much enjoyed seeing other countries and cultures, and exploring the entire world.

Richard is survived by his wife of 68 years, Shirley, and many family members. You can sign his guest book [at this funeral home link](#). Sympathy cards may be sent to Shirley at 12825 W. 65th Way, Apt. 206, Arvada, CO 80004-6001.

NPS Alumni

Death Of Bill Cissel

Bill Cissel, 69, passed away on May 1st in Beavercreek, Ohio.

Bill was born in Christiansted, Saint Croix. He received his associate's degree at the then College of the Virgin Islands St. Croix campus before transferring to Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, where he earned his bachelor's degree.

Bill's love of history and his home lead him to work at Fort Fredrik for the government of the Virgin Islands, then for the NPS in Christiansted as a local historian and curator. His personal research,

documentation and ability to accurately speak on local history lead to many achievements and he was sought out on numerous occasions for his expertise.

He is survived by his wife of 37 years, Susan, and by family members. A memorial service will be held at St. George's Episcopal Church, 5520 Far Hills Ave., Kettering, Ohio, 45429 on Saturday, May 25th, at 11:00 am.

To share a memory of Bill or leave a special message for his family, [click on this link](#).

[Special note: Colleague Sheila Ross is gathering information on the role Bill played in getting Congress to authorize Salt River Bay National Historic Park and Ecological Preserve in 1992 in time for the worldwide quinentennial celebration of Columbus' voyages of discovery. It contains the Columbus landing site, the only known location in what is now U.S. territory where members of a Columbus expedition set foot. Bill conducted extensive research and had intimate knowledge of the site and the archeological treasures of Pre-Columbian ballparks and settlements in the area, and efforts are being made to honor him and preserve his name. If you can help her, please send a note to her at sheilamross@mac.com or 202-253-6664.]

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:

- *Fort Union Trading Post NHS* – Andy Banta, the park's longtime superintendent, will retire on May 31st. Banta has worked for the Service for more than 40 years, beginning his career as a volunteer at Grand Canyon. Before becoming superintendent there, he worked at Rocky Mountain, Fort Laramie, Badlands and Fossil Butte in natural resource management, law enforcement, and interpretation. Source: [Williston Herald](#).
- *Southern Idaho Group* – Wade Vagais has been selected as superintendent of a newly created group of southern Idaho parks – Craters of the Moon, Hagerman Fossil Beds, and Minidoka. Vagais has managed Craters of the Moon since October 2015. He has been interim superintendent for all three sites since May 2017. Source: [KIDK News](#).
- *Mount Rushmore NM* – Denice Swank, currently deputy superintendent at Denali, will become acting superintendent of Mount Rushmore on June 2nd, following Cheryl Schreier, who will retire on May 31st after 40 years of service in the government. Source: [KNBN News](#).
- *Pinnacles NP* – Blanca Alvarez Stransky has been named the new superintendent of Pinnacles. She will move into her new position in June. She succeeds Karen Beppler-Dorn, who transferred to Hopewell Culture in September. Source: [Benitoink.com](#).

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.

- *Saguaro NP* – Between May 8th and 18th, eight suspected arson fires were set in or adjacent to the park. Four were set during the Mother's Day Fire in the Rincon Mountain District, which burned 1200 acres and attracted national media attention. Two of the fires were set along Golden Gate Road in the Tucson Mountain District. The fires have ranged in size from a tenth of an acre to ten acres. An arson investigator has been called in to assist in the investigation, and rangers have increased boundary patrols. There are no suspects at this time. Winds increased to 40 mph yesterday and are expected to continue today. Submitted by Chief Ranger Paula Rooney.

- *El Malpais NM* – Thirty-four National Guardsmen from four states have been cleaning up unexploded World War II bombs from the park. One remote area of the park, the McCarty's Crater area, was used as a training target during the war for flyers from Kirkland Air Force Base (then an Army airfield). They have already located 18 live 100-pound bombs and nine detonators in a one-square-mile area. The original plan was to clear a nine-square-mile area suspected of containing over 50 bombs, but it has since been determined that a complete clearance of this area will not be possible. Demolition of all devices found in the park will occur today. A number of new caves were also discovered during the project. Submitted by Chief Ranger Ken Mabery.
- *Yellowstone NP* – On the afternoon of May 22nd, a 43-year-old park visitor was gored and seriously injured by a large male bison adjacent to the Lake Hotel. The man and a friend had approached to within ten or fifteen feet of the bison to have their pictures taken. While they were standing with their backs to the animal, it charged. The man's companion was able to escape, but the victim received a severed puncture wound in the right thigh. He was taken by ambulance to a hospital in Jackson for treatment. Submitted by Chief Ranger's Office.

Acknowledgements

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

- Editor: Bill Halainen
- Production: Steve Pittleman
- Regular Correspondents: Don Hellmann, Dennis Burnett, Rick Smith, Emily Thompson, Duncan Morrow, and Mark Forbes
- Issue Contributors: Bob Martin, John Reynolds, Dan Kirschner, Cathy Halainen, Ginny Rousseau, Bill Walters

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

"As one reflects on the dimensions of the park system today, it is useful to remember that the concept of a system of places and structures to embrace the national patrimony is a relatively new idea. In the beginning the primary object was to set aside the greatest of the majestic 'wonders' of the nation. Today that concept embraces a wide spectrum of resources - natural, historical, and recreational - that taken together share a remarkable similarity to the geographic and ethnic pluralism of our culture. It is hard to imagine how even a conscious plan could have achieved so much so well."

Director Russell Dickenson, from the forward to *The National Park Service*, 1983

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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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