



The Coalition Weekly Report Wednesday, June 5, 2019

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Incidents

Alaska Regional Office Two Regional Employees Killed In Aircraft Crash

Jeff Babcock, regional aviation manager, and Charles Benson, regional safety manager, were killed in an off-duty airplane crash in Whitehorse, Canada, on Monday, May 27th.

According to the coroner's press release, Benson and Babcock had bought the plane, a 1952 Cessna 170B, in Minnesota on May 25th, intending to fly it back to Palmer. They arrived in Whitehorse from Watson Lake in the afternoon, then took off again for Anchorage about an hour later. Moments later, the plane went down, crashing into a forest about 600 meters away from the end of the runway. A column of smoke was seen rising from the area and emergency personnel from Whitehorse Fire Department, the Whitehorse RCMP and airport firefighters responded immediately.

Jeff Babcock had a distinguished 23-year career as a sergeant, lieutenant and captain in the Alaska State Troopers, where he served as a commercial pilot, aircraft and vessel section supervisor, use of force instructor, accident reconstructionist, undercover investigator, internal investigator, tactical dive master, firearms instructor and certified flight instructor. After retiring from the Alaska State Troopers and before coming to work with the National Park Service, Jeff flew for seven years as a pilot for K-2 Aviation. He enjoyed flying guests around Mt. Denali and sharing with them his favorite parts of Alaska.

Eric Benson served for 25 years in both the U.S. Air Force and Army on a variety of assignments. He served as a UH-60 Army aviator, platoon leader, company executive officer, brigade aviation element leader, and aviation maintenance company commander. Eric's last active duty assignment was as battalion executive officer for the general support aviation battalion of the 10th Mountain Division in Fort Drum, New York. He joined the National Park Service after retiring from the Army.

Both men were long-time Alaska residents and well known throughout the state. Services for Babcock were held on June 1st; private services are pending for Benson.

"Jeff and Eric were two of our very best and the National Park Service and Alaska Region have suffered a terrible loss," said Bert Frost, Alaska's regional director. "Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of Jeff and Eric. We are heartbroken."

Sources: Peter Christian, [Alaska Regional Office](#), and Jackie Hong, [Yukon News](#)

Big Bend NP Much Of Castolon Historic Area Burned By Wildfire

The Castolon Historic Area was heavily damaged by a wildfire on Wednesday, May 22nd.

Smoke from the wildfire was first spotted on Tuesday on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande River. By 6 p.m. Wednesday, embers were crossing over the river and causing flare ups in the park. Additional wildland and structural fire crews were called in to support park staff.

At that time, shade temperatures were near 109 degrees, with single digit relative humidity. Winds were pushing the fire northwest toward the Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive; based on fire behavior at that time, the fire was expected to stay in the lower elevations along the Rio Grande, burning in the mesquite and river cane bosques.

A dramatic shift in the gusting winds, however, blew a shower of embers east across the Castolon Historic District, igniting the roof of the bathrooms and the historic shade ramada of the barracks building, which contained the La Harmonia store and Castolon Visitor Center). This shade structure served as a wick, drawing the fire directly into the building attic. Structural fire crews were on scene with engines, but were unable to extinguish the fire in these buildings.

Crews had to quickly prioritize which structures they could safely and effectively protect. They shifted their focus to the now-smoldering officer's quarters. By peeling away stucco, they gained access to the interior wooden structure that was beginning to burn and were able to save this structure with minimal scorching.

Of the historic buildings at Castolon, all but two were ultimately saved by both wildland and structural crews, who worked through the night. The saved structures include the officers quarters, the Magdalena House, the Garlick House, the Alvino House, a historic wagon and steam pump, and a guard shack, granary and tack room.

Buildings in the Castolon Historic Area were constructed about 100 years ago and housed units of the U.S. cavalry during the Mexican Revolution.

Sources: Caleb Downs, [Houston Chronicle](#), and Bill Gabbert, [Wildfire Today](#).

Mount Rainier NP

Six Climbers Caught In Rockfall; One Killed, Two Injured

On the night of May 29th, six climbers who were camped at the mountain's 10,400-foot level were caught in a rockfall that swept through their campsite. One climber – Arleigh Dean, 45, of Juneau, Alaska – was killed instantly and two others were injured.

The climbers – three pairs of climbing partners – were on their way to the summit on the Liberty Ridge route. Around 8 p.m. that evening, a local 911 dispatcher received a call reporting the rockfall. Search and rescue volunteers were unable to reach the climbers on Wednesday, but were able to fly to the site the next day.

They airlifted the most seriously injured climber, a 37-year-old man who was Dean's climbing partner, to Harborview Medical Center. Later in the day, they flew out the other injured climber and Dean's body, then the remaining three climbers.

Park spokesman Kevin Bacher said that all six climbers were experienced, had registered with the park, and had the proper equipment to make the ascent. Even though this is the best time of the year to climb the mountain, constant freezing and thawing creates rockfall conditions all over the mountain.

“Rockfall is very common on Mount Rainier. There's rocks falling on this volcano all the time,” said Bacher. “So the challenge for people climbing the mountain is to simply to be aware of those risks and mitigate them as much as they can.”

Twenty-four people were involved in the rescue and recovery operation.

Sources: [KOMO News \(first report\)](#) and [KOMO News \(follow-up report\)](#).

North Cascades NP Searchers Find Missing Seven-Year-Old Girl

A missing seven-year-old girl was found safe on the evening of Sunday, May 28th, nearly 24 hours after she got lost in the North Cascades. She'd last been seen playing in the Lower Goodell group campground.

Searchers found the girl hunkered down in a steep, woody area about a half mile from where she'd last been seen the previous evening. She'd evidently decided to stay put, then call out to rescuers when they got near her location.

More than 120 volunteers and five canine teams participated in the search. At times, a helicopter and drones were used to try to get a view of the search area from above.

Source: [KOMO News](#).

Grand Teton NP Man Rescued Following Thousand-Foot Sliding Fall

On May 29th, emergency responders from the park, Teton County SAR and Jackson Hole Mountain Resort rescued a backcountry skier who was injured in a thousand-foot sliding fall on the west side of Cody Peak.

Four people were hiking from the top of the resort's tram to go backcountry skiing when one member of the group – Stephen Sherk, 24 – slipped on firm snow and ice and fell approximately a thousand feet. One member of the group called 911 while the remaining pair, joined by two people from another group who both happened to be EMTs, descended to Sherk.

Although the accident site was determined to be inside the park's boundaries, park and county search and rescue leaders decided that Teton County would maintain command in the interest of efficiency. The county helicopter dropped off a rescuer on a nearby ridge, who then skied to Sherk and determined that a short-haul extraction was appropriate.

The park short-haul team responded and Sherk was short-hauled from the location, then taken by county ambulance to St. John's Medical Center in Jackson.

Source: [East Idaho News](#).

Capitol Reef NP Three Overdue Hikers Rescued

Three overdue hikers – two men and a woman, all in their twenties – who'd headed out on a hike on the Mulie Twist Trail on Wednesday, May 22nd, were rescued the following Saturday after calling for help.

A Garfield County dispatcher received a call concerning the overdue hikers around 7 p.m. on Thursday. Rangers and the county SAR team began searching for them shortly thereafter. The trailhead was checked from the air, but their car couldn't be seen because it was green and had been parked off the side of a road among green trees. Rangers subsequently located it and a search was begun of Strike Valley Canyon.

Air searchers finally spotted the hikers in the slot canyon. The hikers reported that it had started to rain as they hiked into the canyon and they'd become wet, cold and fatigued. The woman had become hypothermic, so the trio decided to hold up and wait for help. Rope rescue teams from Garfield County and the park eventually extracted the hikers safely.

Source: Marjorie Cortez, [Deseret News](#).

Glacier NP Cyclists Stranded By Avalanche On Going-to-the-Sun Road

Thirteen cyclists who were riding on Going-to-the-Sun Road on Memorial Day became stranded when an avalanche fell at Triple Arches after they'd passed that point, blocking the road. It took about eight hours for park crews to clear away the snow, allowing them to return down the highway.

The park had closed the road to pedestrian and cyclist traffic at the Loop earlier that day after a separate significant rock slide blocked the road and prevented emergency vehicle travel. By that time, though, many cyclists were already beyond the road closure. Members of the park's volunteer bike patrol were also up the road, though on the west side of the avalanche slide area. They relayed the call for help to park dispatch and stayed in the area for more than four hours until park rangers gained access to the scene.

A park road crew cleared the rock slide and begin cutting a path through the avalanche debris to open the way for the stranded cyclists. Avalanche forecasters with the U.S. Geological Survey conducted an assessment of the avalanche area and slope above it; after several hours, they determined that the snow had stabilized, allowing crews to safely clear the road.

The cyclists were reportedly cold but in good spirits and otherwise unharmed.

Source: [National Park Traveler](#).

National Park System Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents

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

- *Appalachian NST* – The May 25th edition of the *Boston Globe* ran a story about “the twisted, fatal journey” of accused Appalachian Trail killer James Jordan. It’s a story of how Jordan “unraveled” psychologically over a lifetime until he became a delusional paranoid. “He was a hazard in plain view, a long, loud cry for help that was never really answered,” the authors write. “[His story is that of] a man trapped and tormented by his own mind, whose efforts to escape his troubles led him out into nature and, ultimately, onto the Appalachian Trail...His transformation into the menacing Sovereign [his trail name], say many who know him, was at once shocking and sadly predictable.” Source: By Evan Allen, Laura Crimaldi and Alejandro Serrano, [Boston Globe](#).
- *Rocky Mountain NP* – The body of Ryan Albert, 30, who disappeared on Longs Peak last October, has been found and recovered. An extensive search was conducted for him at the time, but without success. On May 25th, a team of park climbing rangers found a glove matching the brand Albert wore. They subsequently searched an area called The Trough and found Albert’s body, covered by deep snow. The location was about a thousand feet below the Keyhole Route, which Albert was thought to have been climbing. Source: Dan Alexander, [WKXW News](#).

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center Fire Activity Remains Low 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.

As of last Friday, there were six large fires burning nationwide. Significant activity was reported in Florida, South Carolina, Alaska, Arizona, Texas and California.

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

- *Big Bend NP* – As of last Friday, the Castolon Fire (see the incident report above) had burned 944 acres and was 90% contained. Full containment was expected on Saturday. Evacuations and road closures remained in effect.

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.

- *Report Finds That Feds Aren’t Doing Enough Prescribed Fire – Fire*, an open-access, peer-reviewed online journal on topics pertaining to wildland fire, has posted a report entitled “[We’re Not Doing Enough Prescribed Fire in the Western United States to Mitigate Wildfire Risk.](#)” The author, Crystal Kolden, a scientist at the Department of Forest, Rangeland and Fire Sciences at the University of Idaho, writes that research “suggests that the best available science is not being adopted into management practices, thereby further compounding the fire deficit in the Western US and the potential for more wildfire disasters.” Her conclusion is based on figures that show that the annual extent of prescribed burning in the Western US remained stable or decreased between 1998 and 2018, while 70% of all prescribed fire was completed primarily by non-federal entities in the Southeast. Source: Crystal Kolden, [Fire](#).

Current Incident Resource Commitments

Category	May 10th	May 17th	May 31st
Area Command Teams	0	0	0
NIMO Teams	0	0	0
Type 1 Teams	0	0	0
Type 2 Teams	2	1	1
Crews	11	4	12
Engines	29	2	56
Helicopters	7	4	5
Total FF/Overhead	417	160	622

Fires/Acreage

Category	2019 Total	2008-2018 Ave	2019 Variance
Year-to-Date Fires	14,561	24,678	- 10,117
Year-to-Date Acres	268,740	1,248,217	- 979,477

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.

Note: Although this report covers a two week period, it’s in actuality a summary for the week ending May 24th, as the House and the Senate were in recess from May 27th through May 31st for the Memorial Day holiday.

New Public Laws

Nothing to report.

Senate Actions

May 21 – The Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry held a hearing to examine climate change and the agricultural sector. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at this hearing.

May 21 – The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held a hearing to examine opportunities to advance renewable energy and energy efficiency efforts in the United States. Testifying were Daniel R. Simmons, assistant secretary for energy efficiency and renewable energy, and Martin Keller, director of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, both of the Department of Energy, and other public witnesses.

May 22 – The Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies held a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for fiscal year 2020 for the Department of the Interior after receiving testimony from Secretary Bernhardt.

May 23 – The Senate passed H.R. 2157, to make supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, by a vote of 85 yeas to 8 nays. As passed by the Senate, the bill includes the following for the National Park Service:

- An additional \$50 million for the Historic Preservation Fund account for necessary expenses related to the consequences of Hurricanes Florence and Michael and Typhoon Yutu.
- An additional \$78 million for the construction account for necessary expenses related to the consequences of Hurricanes Florence and Michael, Typhoons Yutu and Mangkhut, and the calendar year 2018 wildfires, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions.

While the amounts included for the National Park Service in the Senate version of the bill are identical to those in the House bill, the bill now returns to the House for a vote on the other Senate amendments.

House Actions

May 21 – The House agreed to H. Res. 354, celebrating the 100th anniversary of the passage and ratification of the 19th Amendment, providing for women's suffrage, to the Constitution of the United States. As the resolution notes, May 21, 1919, was the date the House passed this amendment to the Constitution.

May 21 – The Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing entitled “Undermining Mercury Protections: EPA Endangers Human Health and the Environment”. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at this hearing.

May 21 – The Committee on Oversight and Reform Subcommittee on Government Operations held a hearing entitled “Trump's War on a Merit Based Civil Service”. Testimony was heard from Margaret Weichert, deputy director of management, Office of Management and Budget, and acting director, Office of Personnel Management; Triana McNeil, acting director of strategic issues, Government Accountability Office; Norbert E. Vint, acting inspector general, Office of Inspector General, Office of Personnel Management; and public witnesses.

May 21 – The Committee on Science, Space, and Technology Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight held a hearing entitled “The Need for Resilience: Preparing America's Transportation Infrastructure for Climate Change”. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at this hearing.

May 22 – The Committee on Appropriations approved the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, FY 2020. The funding levels for the National Park Service were as noted in [the May 22nd edition](#), but the bill did not provide any of the \$5.7 million requested for the NPS portion of DOI’s planned reorganization. Instead, the committee provided an additional \$50 million, spread throughout the NPS accounts, to begin rebuilding seasonal and permanent staff capacity that has been lost in recent years, which should allow the hiring of an additional 500 positions along with seasonal employees.

The committee also expressed its concern with the Service’s proposal to modify long-standing procedures to nominate properties to the National Register, which the Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks opposes. The committee said it was troubled that the Service failed to consult with other federal land management agencies, state and tribal historic preservation officers, and other key stakeholders during the proposal’s development or conduct required consultation. The committee urged the Park Service to withdraw the proposed rule and consult with key stakeholders on the underlying issues the Service is trying to resolve.

The committee also declined to provide funds for the project to rehabilitate barracks at the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site that were intended as part of a future plan to relocate the Pacific West Regional Office from its current location in California. The committee instead told the Park Service to work with stakeholders and Congress on the plan for the future of the regional office.

May 22 – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands held a hearing on the following bills:

- H.R. 182, to extend the authorization for the Cape Cod National Seashore Advisory Commission.
- H.R. 307, to provide for partnerships among state and local governments, regional entities, and the private sector to preserve, conserve, and enhance the visitor experience at nationally significant battlefields of the American Revolution, War of 1812, and Civil War.
- H.R. 473, to authorize the Every Word We Utter Monument to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia in commemoration of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which gave women the right to vote.
- H.R. 1088, to authorize the Society of the First Infantry Division to make modifications to the First Division Monument located on federal land in Presidential Park in District of Columbia.
- H.R. 1130, to authorize the secretary of the interior to conduct a special resource study of Fort Pillow Historic State Park in Henning, Tennessee.
- H.R. 1179, to establish within the National Park Service the African American Burial Grounds Network, to coordinate and facilitate federal and non-federal activities to identify, interpret, preserve, and record unmarked, previously abandoned, underserved, and other African-American burial grounds.
- H.R. 1248, to designate certain river segments within the York watershed in the State of Maine as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.
- H.R. 1472, to rename the Homestead National Monument of America near Beatrice, Nebraska, as the Homestead National Historical Park.
- H.R. 1487, to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of portions of the Los Angeles coastal area in the state of California to evaluate alternatives for protecting the resources of the coastal area. The bill would study the coastline and adjacent areas to the Santa Monica Bay from Will Rogers State Beach to Torrance Beach, including the areas in and around Ballona Creek and the Baldwin Hills and the San Pedro section of the City of Los Angeles, excluding the Port of Los Angeles north of Crescent Avenue.
- H.R. 1727, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a credit against income tax for qualified conservation contributions which include national scenic trails.
- H.R. 2360, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of alternatives for commemorating Long Island’s aviation history, including a determination of the suitability and feasibility of designating parts of the study area as a unit of the National Park System. The bill’s focus would be on the Hempstead Plains, the areas surrounding Suffolk County Air Force Base, the hamlet of Bethpage, the hamlet of Port Washington, and the village of Farmingdale.

- H.R. 2427, to reauthorize the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network through fiscal year 2025.
- H.R. 2490, to amend the National Trails System Act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study on the feasibility of designating the Chief Standing Bear National Historic Trail.
- H.R. 2525, to establish the Steel Valley National Heritage Area in the States of Pennsylvania and Ohio.

Deputy Director P. Daniel Smith was the witness for the Department of the Interior.

May 22 – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife held a hearing entitled “Responding to the Global Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services”. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at this hearing.

National Park Service

National Park System

A summary of articles pertaining to management and oversight of the NPS, to current trends and issues affecting the National Park System, or to either all or parts of the entire system:

- *Instagramming Visitors Packing Parks* – National Public Radio broadcast a story on Morning Edition last month about the explosion of visitors coming to parks to get cool photos on their iPhones or cameras, a trend greatly exacerbated by social media. The story opens with an anecdote about a professional photographer who’s been coming to Canyonlands for decades trying to get a shot of sunrise through famed Mesa Arch but having to “squeeze through throngs of other photographers and smartphone-wielding tourists to do so, nearly 50 people total.” The reason? “That’s because Mesa Arch has joined the growing ranks of places in the United States that have become #Instafamous. The landmark first gained popularity in 2010 after Microsoft used a picture of the sunrise there as one of its default backgrounds for its Windows 7 operating system. The sandstone formation has since caught on in social media circles and has been tagged on Instagram more than 25,000 times.” The story talks about how this phenomena is occurring everywhere across the nation. Said one of the photographer’s friends with considerable insight: “Solitude, peaceful moments and nature [are what makes the parks so amazing]. We’re so focused on saying, ‘We were there.’ So focused on having that information that people think you can capture on a snapshot. But you can’t do that. You have to take the time to experience it. It’s sort of an old-fashioned approach. But there’s no shortcut.” Source: Nate Hegyi, [National Public Radio](#).
- *Former Congresswoman Encourages Adequate Funding For NPS* – Former Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards (D-MD) wrote an op-ed piece for the *Washington Post* on May 26th on the sad state of disrepair of the national parks and the need for sufficient funding to ameliorate the problem. “Current tax dollars, fees and the support of the National Park Foundation (the parks’ charitable arm) are simply not enough to meet the nationwide demand and disrepair,” she says. “Sadly, if the parks had a homeowners’ association, they would be racking up citations for violations.” She goes on to note that “the human invasion into the parks goes beyond the tramping of millions of feet... [as] the effects of climate change are also taking a toll.” Her concluding observation: “Of the 61 national parks, I’ve only visited 38, and I want them to be around and in good repair when I finish the list. So, as I get my RV ready for summer travels, I hope Congress gets to work to make our parks ready for this season and for future generations.” Source: Donna F. Edwards, [Washington Post](#).
- *Climate Change Travel Guide* – *Seattle Times* cartoonist David Horsey illustrated a recent short editorial on the president’s “great state of denial” concerning climate change with a cartoon that imaginatively depicts the covers of travel brochures of the future, including North Cascades (“Come see the smallest snowpack in 800 years”), Yosemite (visit the park for “an

encounter with wildfires and smoke”), and Glacier (“visit the glacier before it entirely melts”). Click on the following link to see his artwork. Source: David Horsey, [Seattle Times](#).

Around The Parks

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

- *Blue Ridge Parkway* – Interior rehabilitation of the long-closed Bluffs Coffee Shop restaurant, located along the parkway in Doughton Park, is scheduled to begin this summer, with a planned opening date in the summer of 2020. The Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation is managing the renovations. Construction first began on the Bluffs Coffee Shop and Service Station in 1937 and all major features there were in place by 1949. A nearby 35-site picnic area, built in 1937-38, was originally designated for African-Americans. The restaurant, the adjacent gift shop, and the 24-bed Bluffs Lodge have been closed since 2010, when no one stepped up to continue running them as a park concession. The park will also be repaving 115 miles of the parkway between now and November, including segments between Mabry Mill and Cumberland Knob, Doughton Park and West Jefferson, and Cone Memorial Park and the North Carolina Minerals Museum. Sources: Marty McGee, [Wilkes Journal-Patriot](#); Rose Eiklor, [Spectrum News](#).
- *C&O Canal NHP* – A project to restore the section of the canal in Georgetown recently reached a milestone – water began flowing in certain areas for the first time in about two years. That water has since been cut off to make way for the installation of new dams, but it’s expected that it will flow again in a few weeks. Other improvements are being planned in collaboration with Georgetown Heritage. The park has so far spent \$6.5 million restoring canal locks 3, 4, and 5 in Georgetown; next will come improvements to the towpath and the addition of a replica canal boat pulled by mules that will offer rides to visitors. Future plans call for everything from adding kayaking on the canal to establishing spaces to enjoy relative solitude along its length. Source: Tom Roussey, [WJLA](#).
- *Glen Canyon NRA* – A recent entry in this newsletter reported on the discovery of old Spanish coins near Halls Crossing Marina. Two experts on Spanish coins have since determined that they’re authentic, but that they came from a modern coin collection, thereby ending speculation that an early Spanish explorer might have dropped them in the area. It’s unclear if the coins – one dating back as early as 1252 and another as early as 1662 – were accidentally or intentionally dropped there by a park visitor. Source: Carter Williams, [KSL News](#).
- *Grand Canyon NP* – Weather-related rockslides have caused a new break in the North Rim water pipeline – the sixth one this year. The pipeline is located on the side of a steep cliff, which makes repairs difficult. North Rim facilities remain open with water limitations in place for some services. The lodge and campground are open, but the laundry and public showers have been closed. Meanwhile, an EA has been signed clearing the way for replacement of the three-mile-long trans-canyon pipeline, which was built in the 1960s and has repeatedly failed over recent years. It will likely cost between \$80 million and \$110 million to build. The plan also okays the relocation of the pipeline’s water intake and the construction of treatment facilities and tanks to support the line. About 20,000 people daily rely on that water for drinking, cooking and firefighting. Sources: [Arizona Daily Star](#); Laura Morales, [KJZZ News](#).
- *Independence NHP* – Independence Mall, closed for a landscaping project in mid-March, reopened on May 17th. Crews from BrightView Holdings, a leading commercial landscaping services company, have made significant improvements to the landscape, including the replacement of nearly 100,000 square feet of damaged sod, as well as irrigation repair, tree care and improvements to gardens along the Mall’s perimeter. BrightView will now begin the second phase of its donation to the park – maintaining the Independence Mall landscape for the next year free of charge. Source: [Business Wire](#).
- *Lassen Volcanic NP/Point Reyes NS* – The University of California has announced that the two parks will be added to its system of natural reserve system: “By voting today [May 17th] to

include Point Reyes Field Station and Lassen Field Station, the UC Regents expanded the world's largest university-administered reserve network to 41 reserves. Located within Point Reyes National Seashore, Point Reyes Field Station is a few miles south of the west Marin town of Olema. The field station is housed at a historic ranch house and includes an adjacent campground. The reserve will be operated by UC Berkeley. Lassen Field Station will be based at the headquarters of Lassen Volcanic National Park, near the Tehama County town of Mineral. Administered by UC Davis, Lassen Field Station will offer users access to national park facilities such as cabins, classroom space, and camping." Source: Kathleen Wong, [University of California](#).

- *Manhattan Project NHP* – Los Alamos National Laboratory will be offering public tours of the new Manhattan Project NHP on July 11th. The tours are a collaboration between the NPS and the Department of Energy National Nuclear Security Administration's Los Alamos Field Office. Participants will see the Pond Cabin, which served as an office for [Emilio Segrè's Radioactivity Group](#) studying plutonium, a battleship bunker used to protect equipment and staff during implosion design explosives testing, and the Slotin Building, site of [Louis Slotin's criticality accident](#). Members of the public will be invited to register for the tours when registration opens in late June. To register, visit www.eventbrite.com/e/manhattan-project-national-historical-park-tours-registration-57118809898. Additional tour opportunities will be announced throughout the year. Source: [Los Alamos Monitor](#).
- *Olympic NP* – A plan entitled "Wild Olympics" has been announced by Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) and Rep. Derek Kilmer (D-WA) whereby 126,000 acres of mountains and forests on the Olympic Peninsula would be designated as wilderness and 19 streams would be protected under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The proposal is supported by five Native American tribes, as well as such major peninsula businesses as Taylor Shellfish and Ocean Gold Seafoods. The land proposed for protection is in the doughnut shaped Olympic National Forest, which surrounds Olympic National Park. Source: Joel Connolly, [Seattle Post-Intelligencer](#).
- *Organ Pipe Cactus NM* – Customs and Border Protection is proposing to construct 63 miles of new bollard wall to replace dilapidated and outdated walls in Pima and Cochise counties – including those along nearly all of the park's border with Mexico. The project also includes road construction and improvement and lighting installation. The proposed design of the new wall includes 18-to-30 foot, concrete-filled steel bollards that are approximately 6" x 6" in diameter. Comments on the proposal will be accepted until Friday, July 5th, by email at commentseov@cbp.dhs.gov or by mail to U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Border Patrol Headquarters, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. 6.5E Mail Stop 1039, Washington, DC 20229-1100. Source: Kurt Repanshek, [National Parks Traveler](#).
- *Yosemite NP* – On May 20th, the *New York Times* ran a story entitled "Peering Beneath a Source of El Capitan's Deadly Rockfalls" that reported on a thermal imaging project that has shown that there is little "glue" between the rock face and the sheets that regularly peel off it: "Over 20 [rockfalls] have occurred in the last decade, including one in 2017 that killed a climber. The majority of these falls have been linked to rock formations known as flakes, sheets of rock that are peeling off El Capitan like layers of onion skin. With infrared imaging, scientists have now essentially peered behind two of the largest flakes, Boot Flake and Texas Flake, to determine how well they're connected to El Capitan. The results, presented at a meeting of the European Geosciences Union in Vienna in April, suggest that the underlying structures linking each flake to the 100-million-year-old granite are surprisingly small. By visualizing these attachment points, scientists can monitor them to keep climbers safe." Source: Katherine Kornei, [New York Times](#).
- *Zion NP* – The park has announced plans to build a visitor contact station on its east side as part of a new "gateway community" to be known as the Applecross Station. The station is being built as a collaborative effort between the park, Kane County, the Zion Forever Project, BLM, and Zion Mountain Ranch landowners. It will be located just outside of the park boundaries and will include the visitor center, a shuttle hub, private businesses and a new trail network. The visitor contact station will offer many of the same amenities as the visitor center in Zion

Canyon, as well as a few of its own, including information about the park, exhibits, backcountry permits, a Kane County Office of Tourism museum, a theater, food, public restrooms and a Zion Forever Project store. As it is a public-private partnership, the visitor contact station will be an official NPS center, designed by the park, but will be run by the Zion Forever Project, probably through a long-term lease of the building. The store will help support the center, which will be staffed by a number of the involved agencies. The article contains more details on the project, plus a number of concept drawings that show what it will look like. Source: Mikayla Shoup, [St. George News](#).

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:

- *Antarctic Ice Continues Melting At Rapid Rate* – Almost a quarter of the ice in the West Antarctic ice sheet has been classified as "unstable," according to a new study released in mid-May. This is due to the huge volume of ice that's melted from the ice sheet over the past 25 years. Some areas are losing ice five times faster than they were in the early 1990s. The ice has thinned by some 400 feet in some places, the study said. The ice sheet and its glaciers are melting from underneath as warming sea water – overheated due to man-made climate change – chews away at it from below. The melting has already caused an increase in sea level worldwide. Source: Doyle Rice, [USA Today](#).
- *Sea Levels Could Rise Six Feet Or More By 2100* – Following up on the above: Global sea levels could rise more than six-and-a-half feet by the end of this century if emissions continue unchecked, swamping major cities such as New York and Shanghai and displacing up to 187 million people, [a new study warns](#). The study reports that sea levels may rise much faster than previously estimated due to the accelerating melting of ice sheets in both Greenland and Antarctica. The international researchers predict that in the worst case scenario under which global temperatures increase by nine degrees by 2100, sea levels could rise to more than double the upper limit outlined by the UN climate science panel's last major report. Source: Sareena Dayaram, [CNN](#).

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:

- *Green Wave Sweeps Across Europe* – Elections for the European Parliament (the only parliamentary institution of the European Union that is directly elected by EU citizens aged 18 or older) held in late May yielded an increase from 52 to 71 seats for Green Party members, reflecting an overall trend that Europeans are growing increasingly concerned about the climate crisis, and making them the fourth largest voting block. In particular countries, the results for Green Party members were even more impressive, with gains in seats in France, the Netherlands, Ireland, Finland, Denmark, and Belgium, Luxembourg, and Austria for their strongest showing ever. Source: Monica Medina and Miro Korenha, [Our Daily Planet](#).

National Park System Issues

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

- *Yellowstone NP* – On May 20th, *Science Daily* ran a story on a new study on the impacts of frequent fires on the park's forests, which are adapted to recurring fires every 100 to 300 years

rather than burns that are now occurring much more frequently. “Yellowstone as we know it faces an uncertain future, the researchers say, and one of the big questions they hope to answer is whether the forests can recover.” The report, entitled “[Short-interval severe fire erodes the resilience of subalpine lodgepole pine forests](#),” was prepared by a team of researchers from the University of Wisconsin. Lead researcher Monica Turner had this to say about their conclusions: “Change is going to happen and change is going to happen more quickly than we thought it would. We are learning how the system responds, but we don't know to what degree it will be resilient or adapt in the future. But I am not ready to write it off. We have been surprised in the past.” Source: [Science Daily](#).

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

- *Isle Royale NP* – In their 61st annual survey of moose and wolves on Isle Royale, Michigan Tech wildlife biologists report that moose are now so numerous on the island – numbers are approaching historic highs – that they're beginning to damage the forest. The annual winter survey counted about 2,000 moose, up from about 1,500 over the past couple of years. The 15 wolves on the island, 13 of them recently introduced, are learning how to hunt moose and have killed enough to survive; it's expected that they'll be more effective once they organize into groups. The chief researcher made this observation about the issue underlying this effort to balance out wolves and moose: “We had to answer the question that if climate change caused this problem for wolves on Isle Royale, what, if anything, should we do about it? I believe it was the right decision to bring wolves back. But it's a tough question, and it's going to get raised more and more often in many areas of the world.” Source: John Myers, [West Central Tribune](#).

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

- *Utah's “Mighty Five” National Parks* – A new Utah State University study has confirmed what had been widely suspected – that the state's aggressive “Mighty 5” campaign (named for five Utah parks – Arches, Canyonlands, Zion, Bryce Canyon and Capital Reef) has been largely responsible for the huge spike in visitation to those areas since it began in 2013, particularly when coupled with social media. The campaign attracted an additional half-million visitors on average during each of the three years after the appearance of these ads in major Western cities within a long-day's drive of Utah. Now, says the study's senior author, the time has come to “demarket” southern Utah's premier destinations in an effort to spread around visitation. “At the same time Arches National Park is dealing with issues of congestion, the [Utah] Office of Tourism is saying, ‘Go to Arches,’ with that fabulous campaign of theirs,” he said. “I think the Office of Tourism is cognizant of both the need to promote tourism but also to not wreck the resource that is bringing people here. No one wants to wait in line for 45 minutes to get into a park and then not be able to find a parking spot.” The state is now looking at promoting alternative destinations. Source: Brian Maffley, [Salt Lake Tribune](#).
- *Yosemite NP* – A recent edition of the San Francisco Chronicle reports on serious problems with the park's “troubled” shuttle system, which carries more than 3 million park visitors annually. Due to the huge and increasing crowds in the valley, visitors sometimes have to wait for an hour or more to get a shuttle, as most are filled to capacity. “Over the past year,” reports the author, “the overwhelmed shuttle system at Yosemite has caused shoving matches among vacationers clamoring for a ride and heated words between drivers and passengers. On one occasion, a handful of people were so fed up with buses whizzing by that they formed a human chain across the road to stop a coach.” The park's concessioner, Yosemite Hospitality, a subsidiary of Aramark, says it's working on the problem. Source: Kurtis Alexander, [San Francisco Chronicle](#).

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:

- *Chickasaw NRA* – Over the course of three weeks in May, the park employed three dogs – a golden retriever and two border collies – to inspect boats for zebra mussels and other invasives, as they can check an average sized bass boat in under a minute. Over the course of the summer, the three dogs will visit five other parks as part of a summer-long collaboration between the National Park Service, Working Dogs for Conservation, and SP8 Ecological Services to help share the message about how to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. Said Bill Wright, the park’s superintendent: “Lake of the Arbuckles is one of a few large lakes in Oklahoma that is not already infested with zebra mussels, and we will do everything we can to keep our lake free of harmful invasive species.” Source: Kaylee Douglas, [KFOR News](#).

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

- *Redwood N&SP* – Early last month, a district court judge in California ruled that Caltrans’ efforts to widen a stretch of U.S. Highway 101 through the park could potentially harm the ancient old-growth redwoods trees surrounding the highway, the latest judgment in a years-long battle over the controversial project. According to Caltrans’ 2010 economic assessment of the project, widening the thoroughfare between Oakland and Eureka could increase local exports and economic activity. The judge, however, concluded that this assessment relies on a flawed traffic analysis that fails to provide real justification. He also sided with conservation groups that say the project would threaten the roots of ancient redwoods that tower over the highway. Source: Shomik Mukherjee, [Times-Standard](#).
- *Chaco Culture NHP* – Secretary Bernhardt has agreed to put off oil and gas leasing for a year on land surrounding the park that Native Americans consider sacred. The decision came after he visited the park and met with leaders of the Navajo Nation and Pueblo tribes that have been fighting to protect culturally significant sites beyond the park. A coalition of tribes has called repeatedly for a moratorium on energy development, while members of New Mexico’s congressional delegation have introduced legislation to officially create a buffer zone within 10 miles of the park. Advocates welcomed the decision, but remained concerned that it was a stop-gap measure and argued that only legislation will protect the area’s archaeological and sensitive landscapes by halting new oil and natural gas lease sales on federal holdings within the buffer zone. Source: Susan Montoya Bryan, [Associated Press](#).

The Coalition

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

- *Coalition Supports DOI ASFWP Nominee* – The Coalition has sent a letter supporting the nomination of Rob Wallace to serve as DOI’s assistant secretary overseeing the NPS and USFWS. [Click here to read the letter](#).

Source: Emily Thompson, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator.

From The Archives

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

- *Yellowstone NP* – Around 4:30 p.m. on May 30th, a 23-year-old Montana woman received first and second degree burns over approximately 13 percent of her body after being sprayed during a geyser eruption near Midway Geyser Basin. The woman was visiting the park with two companions when they noticed activity starting at Flood Geyser. They hiked off-trail to the site and were standing on its rim when it erupted. The woman, who was wearing shorts, was burned on her legs. One of her companions was not splashed; the other, who had been fishing

and was wearing waders, was splashed but not injured. The group drove to Madison for assistance. Rangers there transported the woman by ambulance to the Old Faithful Clinic, where she was treated and released. Submitted by Chief Rangers Office.

- *Denali NP* – On the evening of May 24th, climbers on Mt. McKinley found the body of Kee Won Kim, 27, of Pusan, South Korea, a volunteer member of the park's eight person patrol who had been missing since May 21st. Kim was found below the 16,000 foot level in a rock band between the ice climbing route he had completed and the fixed ropes on the headwall of the West Buttress. He was anchored into the snow and apparently had not fallen. The cause of death and events leading up to the accident will not be known until rangers can get to the site and recover his body. Kim's death is the first among park staff and volunteers working on Mount McKinley since 1954, when ranger Elton Thayer died on the Muldrow Glacier. Submitted by John Quinley, Alaska Regional Office.
- *Big Horn Canyon NRA* – On May 13th, two brothers, both of them park employees and members of the Crow tribe, whose lands adjoin the park, were sentenced to 18 and 15 months in prison after being convicted of nine Lacey Act violations for killing bald and golden eagles in 1992 and 1993. The case began in May, 1992, when one of the two men and a non-tribal friend shot a sow black bear from a boat on Bighorn Lake and retrieved three live bear cubs. One cub was eventually seized in Billings, Montana; the second was sold by one of the convicted men to a Montana Fish and Game operative; the third died. Montana wildlife officers then began a 12-month-long undercover operation which led to all of the felony and most of the misdemeanor charges against the brothers, another member of the tribe, and two non-tribal associates. The brothers were snaring and shooting eagles, primarily for the sale or trade of the feathers, and would shoot elk, bear and deer for bait for their snares, which were set out on reservation land around the park. Among the items found during warrant service on one brother's residence was a videotape showing him shooting eagles trapped in snares. The video was filmed by his wife a year before the state and federal investigations were begun, and therefore demonstrated a predisposition to these illegal activities. Additional state charges have been filed and are still pending for felony livestock violations, misdemeanor illegal possession of bears, drug possession, and violations of probation. The assistant U.S. attorney successfully disputed the religious freedom contentions of the defendants. Submitted by Chris Johnson.

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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. Please don't submit them via his personal email address or Facebook page.

A Closing Observation

"It is absolutely essential that man should manage to preserve something other than what helps to make soles for his shoes or sewing machines, that he should leave a margin, a sanctuary, where some of life's beauty can take refuge and where he himself can feel safe from his own cleverness and folly."

Novelist Romain Gary, *The Roots of Heaven*

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The *Coalition Weekly Report* is a publication of [The Coalition To Protect America's National Parks](#). The Coalition is a non-profit organization of past and current NPS employees and their allies that “studies, educates, speaks, and acts for the preservation and protection of the National Park System and mission-related programs of the National Park Service.”

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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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