



The Coalition Weekly Report Wednesday, June 19, 2019

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Incidents

Crater Lake NP Visitor Survives 800 Foot Sliding Fall Into Caldera

A man was rescued on Monday, June 10th, after jumping onto some snow along the lip of the crater, then slipping and sliding about 800 feet into Crater Lake's caldera.

Responders descended into the caldera, reached the man and walked him down to the shoreline, where he was retrieved by a Coast Guard helicopter. He was then transferred to an AirLink Critical Care Transport team and flown to Bend for treatment.

The man fell while in a steep spot near Rim Village that wasn't guarded by a railing.

Source: Jim Ryan, [The Oregonian](#).

Pictured Rocks NL Family Of Four Rescued From Park Shoreline

The captain of a tour vessel heading back to port after a cruise along the park's Lake Superior coastline last week spotted a bit of yellow along the shore. Suspecting it might be from a life jacket, he quickly changed course and soon spotted four people – two adults and two children – huddled on the rocky shoreline and only partly out of the lake's 47 degree waters.

Floating in the water out of the captain's reach was the Minneapolis family's plastic canoe, which held their truck keys, cellphones and other essentials. The canoe had swamped in the blustery conditions, forcing them to swim 100 to 150 yards to the shoreline. All four were wearing lifejackets. They were huddled there, waiting for someone to come by, but their odds seemed long as the light was failing and a storm was blowing up.

The captain radioed the cruise line's office, located about 14 miles away in Munising. The park and the county sheriff's office were also notified.

Realizing it would be foolhardy to nudge his ship any closer to the rocky waters, the captain kept the vessel 200 to 300 yards offshore until two smaller rescue craft arrived and rescued the family. Winds were blowing around 25 mph at the time and it had started raining. The daughter's legs were so numb that a deck hand had to pick her up and carry her to a boat. They were taken to a local hospital.

One of the rescuers, a captain from the sheriff's department, told reporters that it was highly improbable that the four would have survived the night.

Source: Paul Walsh, [Minneapolis Star Tribune](#).

White Sands NM Hiker's Death Attributed To Heat Exposure

A 70-year-old German visitor who died on the Alkali Flat Trail on June 8th likely succumbed to heat exposure.

The park received a call for help around 4 p.m. that day. Responding rangers found the body of Peter Cramer less than a mile from the trailhead. New Mexico State Police officers assisted rangers and are working with them on the investigation into the cause of his death.

Rangers at White Sands say Saturday's temperatures reached 99 degrees. Cramer and his wife were hiking the trail together, but she opted to return to their car because of the heat. When he failed to return, she notified the park.

In 2015, a French couple visiting the park died along the trail in extreme heat. Their nine-year-old son survived and was able to call for help.

Sources: Andra Litton, [KRQE News](#); Kayla Melson, [KRQE News](#).

Yellowstone NP Park Plow Operators Rescue Driver Stuck In Beartooth Pass

Park snow plow operators and a Wyoming Highway Patrol officer rescued a stranded motorist on Highway 212 near Beartooth Pass in the early morning hours of Saturday, June 8th.

The driver had gotten stuck in the snow; a friend had tried to reach him in his four-wheel-drive vehicle, but had to turn back due to three- to four-foot-high drifts. The friend then called for help.

The NPS plow operators cleared a path to the motorist, then, with the help of a state trooper, shoveled the vehicle out of a drift.

The Wyoming Highway Patrol has reminded park visitors that conditions can change quickly in the mountains and motorists should be ready for any possibility.

Source: [KIDK News](#).

Zion NP Three Rescued From Virgin River

A twelve-year-old boy was wading near the edge of the Virgin River around noon on June 14th when he was swept away by the force of the current. His mother and a second woman dove into the water after him and helped him onto a boulder.

Bystanders rescued the second woman, then helped search and rescue crews reach the boy's mother. Rescuers reached the child using a kayak and ropes. No one suffered any injuries during the incident.

The park remains concerned that visitors aren't exercising appropriate caution near the river, which has high water levels this year.

The section of the Virgin River in the park, including the Narrows, was closed at the beginning of April because of fast-flowing snowmelt waters; additional precipitation this year had added to the flow, raising it to a level too high for public access. It's currently flowing at 210 cubic feet per second (cfs), which is enough to knock someone off their feet and drag them downstream.

River access will stay closed until water drops to at least 150 cfs for an entire day, which probably won't happen for another week or two.

Source: Cara MacDonald, [KSL News](#).

Sequoia-Kings Canyon NPs Search Underway For Missing Hiker

An interagency search is being conducted for Ling Dao, 41, who failed to return from a climb up Mount Whitney last week.

Dao planned to summit Mount Whitney on Wednesday, June 12th, then return to work in Virginia the following day after catching a red-eye flight from Las Vegas. His rental car was found in the Whitney Portal parking area on Saturday and a search for him was begun the next day.

Searchers have received several reports from hikers who either saw or spoke with Dao on Wednesday, both during his ascent and at the top of the mountain.

Mount Whitney, the tallest mountain in the lower 48 states, lies on the boundary of Sequoia National Park and the Inyo National Forest. Searchers report that conditions in the backcountry are still extremely snowy, with significant challenges presented by snow instability, ice, and heavy runoff.

Source: Carmen George, [Fresno Bee](#).

National Park System Park Operating Status Summary

A summary of recent openings, closures and other changes in the status of parks and their facilities:

- *Great Basin NP* – Baker Campground remains closed until further notice. High water has damaged the road to the campground and park maintenance crews are working to repair it. River waters are high and flowing swiftly due to runoff from a regional snowpack that was 170% of normal, coupled with rising temperatures and a wet spring. Source: [Elko Daily Free Press](#).
- *Zion NP* – As noted in the incident above, the Narrows remain closed due to high flow in the Virgin River. The closure was instituted last month due to spring snowmelt; although the water level is coming down, the closure will likely continue for another 10 to 14 days. Upper Emerald Pools Trail, Hidden Canyon Trail and Observation Point (from Weeping Rock) are also closed due to rockfall and storm damage. Source: Mercy Owusu, [KTVX News](#).
- *George Washington MP* – One of the parkway's northbound lanes will remain closed indefinitely as the NPS continues to develop a long-term fix for the sinkhole that opened up last month. The Service completely closed the northbound lanes for several days on May 10th after a Park Police officer spotted a sinkhole that measured 10 feet deep by 30 feet long by 20 feet wide. One of the two northbound lanes reopened to traffic on May 14th after the park employed temporary stabilization efforts, including an injection of grout to stabilize the soil, but the right lane remains closed due to a failing 60-year-old, 40-foot deep brick drainage inlet. Source: Max Smith, [WTOP News](#).
- *Fire Island NS* – The Fire Island Lighthouse has been closed so that tests can be conducted on its exterior coating. These tests will make it possible to better understand how the building performs structurally and to determine the cause of its ongoing problems, including high moisture within the facility and deterioration of the outer face of brick and shotcrete coating. The Keeper's Quarters Museum, gift shop and Fresnel lens building, which displays the lighthouse's original lens, will remain open. The lighthouse, run by the nonprofit Lighthouse Preservation Society, has undergone periodic repairs since it was damaged by Hurricane Sandy in 2012. Source: Joan Gralla, [Newsday](#).

National Park System Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents

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

- *Bighorn Canyon NRA* – Last August, three people were killed and a fourth fatally injured when a powerboat crashed into a canyon cliff. Details of the crash were withheld from the news media until the *Billings Gazette* recently filed a FOIA request. Investigators estimated that the Kachina boat, which was powered by two 470 horsepower racing engines, was doing about 55 mph when it hit the wall. The operator, who survived the crash but died later on, had been drinking but was not legally intoxicated; it's likely, though, that he was seriously impaired, as investigators later found ten bottles of prescription medication in his vehicle, all of them with labels warning against the use of alcohol in combination with the medication. The article contains additional details about the tragic crash. Source: Brett French, [Billings Gazette](#).
- *Mount Rainier NP* – The military newspaper *Stars and Stripes* has a remembrance of the climber killed by the rockfall on Mount Rainier earlier this month. Arleigh “Bill” Dean retired from the Army as a Special Forces lieutenant colonel in August 2017 after a career spent leading overseas special operations that many Americans may never know the details about, including “instrumental contributions to the fight against terrorism, particularly ISIS in Iraq and Syria.” Source: Chad Garland, [Stars and Stripes](#).

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center NIFC Now At Preparedness Level 2

The national preparedness level has been raised to PL 2.

The National Interagency Coordination Center began daily incident reporting last week. Editions of this newsletter will therefore carry a summary of the report from the last summary prior to deadline – that is, Tuesday's reports. Others can be found at the [NICC IMSR archive link](#).

Most large fire activity at present is in Alaska, where ten large fires have burned more than 63,000 acres. No large fires were reported in NPS areas.

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

- *Fire Potential Outlook* – On June 1st, NIFC Predictive Services has issued its fire potential outlook for the period from now through September. Interested readers should take a look at the executive summary on the first page, which also includes detailed maps for each of the four months covered. You can see the report at [National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook](#).
- *PG&E In California Plans To Cut Power On Windiest Days* – High winds that snapped a electrical transmission line likely started last year's deadly Camp Fire, and PG&E, the state's biggest utility, wants to assure that a similar incident won't happen again – they'll be cutting power on high wind days. The utility also plans to set up dozens of so-called “resiliency centers,” Johnson said by telephone, where backup generators can be brought in to run essential services. The utility aims to give at least two days warning about a shutoff and has embarked on a public awareness campaign including mailing letters to customers and is working to identify vulnerable residents. It also will be working to get power restored in a day after a shutoff, though its customers could be out for as many as five days. Source: Mark Chediak and Brian Eckhouse, [Bloomberg](#).
- *“Ferocious Start” To Canadian Fire Season* – It's only June, but Canada is already dealing with numerous significant wildfires – 87 were burning in two provinces and two territories as of Monday, June 10th. For more information, see the climate change section further on in this edition.

Current Incident Resource Commitments

Category	May 31st	June 7th	June 14th
Area Command Teams	0	0	0
NIMO Teams	0	0	0
Type 1 Teams	0	0	1
Type 2 Teams	1	1	2
Crews	12	39	40
Engines	56	158	79
Helicopters	5	16	24
Total FF/Overhead	622	1,902	1,841

Fires/Acreage

Category	2019 Total	2009-2018 Ave	2019 Variance
Year-to-Date Fires	17,305	27,566	Minus 10,261
Year-to-Date Acres	464,108	1,680,781	Minus 1,216,673

Sources: [NICC Incident Management Situation Report](#); [National Interagency Fire Center](#); [IMSR Archives](#); [InciWeb Incident Information System](#).

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

June 6 – The president signed into law, H.R. 2157, to make supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019. (Public Law 116–20). See the [June 5th edition](#) for the provisions that affect the National Park Service.

Senate Actions

June 11 – The Senate passed S. 395, to require each agency, in providing notice of a rule making, to include a link to a 100-word plain language summary of the proposed rule.

June 12 – The Committee on Environment and Public Works held a joint hearing with the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Water, and Wildlife to examine United States water regulations, focusing on their impact on states and the American people. Testimony was only from public witnesses as there were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

June 13 – The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held a hearing to examine the outlook for wildland fire and management programs for 2019, after receiving testimony from Shawna Legarza, national director of fire and aviation management for the Forest Service; Jeffery Rupert, director of DOI's wildland fire office; and other public witnesses.

House Actions

June 10 – The House passed H.J. Res. 60, requesting the Secretary of the Interior to authorize unique and one-time arrangements for displays on the National Mall and the Washington Monument during

the period beginning on July 16, 2019, and ending on July 20, 2019. The resolution would request that the secretary authorize the display of NASA and Smithsonian artifacts, digital content, film footage, and associated historic audio and imagery in and around the vicinity of the National Mall, including projected onto the surface of the Washington Monument for five nights of public display in commemoration of the first moon landing.

June 11 – The Committee on the Budget held a hearing entitled “The Costs of Climate Change: Risks to the U.S. Economy and the Federal Budget”. Testimony was heard from J. Alfredo Gómez, director of natural resources and environment for GAO, and public witnesses.

June 11 – The Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing entitled “Critical Mission: Former Administrators Address the Direction of the EPA”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

June 12 – The Committee on Armed Services approved H.R. 2500, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2020 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, and to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year. Division B, Subtitle F, authorizes the establishment of White Sands National Park, consisting of the White Sands National Monument and 8,592 acres transferred from secretary of the army from the White Sands Missile Range. The bill also transfers 3,737 acres from the secretary of the interior to the secretary of the army.

June 13 – The Select Committee on the Climate Crisis held a hearing entitled “Solving the Climate Crisis: Ramping Up Renewables”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

The 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:

- *Report Offers “Innovative Ways” To Reduce Maintenance Backlog* – A recently released report commissioned by The Pew Charitable Trusts and researched and written by the engineering, design and project management firm AECOM identifies three strategies that have the potential to cut the current huge NPS maintenance backlog by \$3.7 billion over 10 years. The monies are intended to complement bipartisan legislation pending in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate – the Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act (H.R. 1225) and the Public Lands Act (S. 500) – that would provide \$6.5 billion over five years to address priority deferred maintenance projects. The report, entitled “[Protecting Our Parks: A Strategic Approach to Reducing the Deferred Maintenance Backlog Facing the National Park Service](#),” recommends eliminating maintenance issues or in some cases transferring responsibility for them to other jurisdictions, finding innovative ways to generate revenue at the sites, and lessening future deferred maintenance by using technology to make park assets more durable and less costly to maintain. Source: Marcia Argust, [The Pew Charitable Trusts](#).
- *NPS Plans To Use Entrance Fees To Pay Staff* – The following is from the May 22nd edition of *The Hill*: “The National Park Service plans to pay the salaries of full-time staff from the money it collects from entrance fees, a move that is likely to enrage Democratic lawmakers who chastised the agency for dipping into the coffers to keep parks open during this year’s partial government shutdown. The new policy, authorized by Interior Secretary David Bernhardt, lets NPS fund additional permanent positions at U.S. national parks and wildlife refuges through the revenue generated by entrance fees known as Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) fees, or ‘rec fees,’ according to a memo sent by Deputy Director Dan Smith to regional directors that was obtained by *The Hill*. The move would circumvent Congress, which is traditionally tasked with providing funding for agency jobs.” See the article for details on this sensitive issue. Source: Miranda Green, [The Hill](#).

Around The Parks

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

- *Death Valley NP* – An Airbus helicopter carried an engineering model of the Lander Vision System (LVS) that will help guide NASA's next Mars mission on a test flight into the park in late May. During the flight – the first in a series of flights – the helicopter and its two-person crew flew a pre-planned sequence of maneuvers while LVS collected and analyzed imagery of the barren, mountainous terrain below. LVS is an integral part of a guidance system that will steer NASA's [Mars 2020](#) rover away from hazardous areas during its final descent to Jezero Crater on February 18, 2021. Source: [Goldrush.com](#).
- *Hagerman Fossil Beds NM* – The National Park Service and Idaho State Department of Parks and Recreation are working together to construct a 3,400-square-foot visitor center at Billingsley Creek Park. The state will fund the center and the NPS will pay the state a lease fee for 25 years. The site will also include an amphitheater for programs and a campground. Source: [KMVT News](#).
- *Lake Clark NP&P/Gates of the Arctic NP&P* – The Postal Service has released a set of stamps with images of a dozen of the nation's wild and scenic rivers, several of them in NPS areas. Two of those rivers are in Alaskan national parks – the Tlikakila River is located within Lake Clark; the north fork of the Koyukuk River runs near Gates of the Arctic. Source: [KTVA News](#).
- *Lincoln Memorial* – Maintenance workers drained about four million gallons of water from the memorial's reflecting pool during the first week of June so that they could fix a broken water line that's caused algae to form in it. The problem with the water line had compromised the circulation system in the pool, leading to issues with the water quality, including the growth of algae and a noticeable green tint to the water. The line is being repaired and the bottom of the pool will be cleaned before it's refilled. Source: Dana Hedgpeth, [Washington Post](#).
- *Rocky Mountain NP* – The American Institute of Architects has conferred a Small Project Award on the park for its new toilets on Longs Peak. Constructed for the park by the Fast Company, these most interesting toilets have been built to withstand the peak's famously strong winds – they're constructed of stone and built to withstand wind speeds of up to 225 miles per hour. Their steel frames were put together, then filled with rocks that were collected on-site, which greatly reduced the materials that builders would need to bring up the mountain. Thanks to the use of on-site rocks in their construction, they so blend into the landscape as to be practically unnoticeable. The article includes several good photos of the structures. Source: Spencer McKee, [Out There Colorado](#).
- *Santa Monica Mountains NRA* – Park biologists have launched a crowdsourcing effort to catalog tens of thousands of wildlife photos that have been collected over the past year and taken from several dozen cameras that have been set up along the Los Angeles River. The Wildlife of Los Angeles Project is part of a research effort to document urban animals that live in one of the densest and most populated cities in the world. Participants do not need a scientific background or degree. What is needed are access to the internet, time and attention to detail. For more info, click on the following link. Source: [Thousand Oaks Acorn](#).
- *Shenandoah NP* – Years of acid rain in and around the park have negatively affected soil and water quality in the Meadow Run watershed, resulting in impacts to overall forest health. While pollution has decreased dramatically in the last two decades, many sensitive watersheds like Meadow Run do not have the capacity to restore themselves naturally. The park is therefore embarking on a process to improve aquatic and terrestrial ecosystem health in this degraded watershed. The park is seeking the public's assistance in identifying issues associated with acid rain and in determining potential methods for improving the environmental conditions in the watershed. Comments may be submitted until July 27th [at the park's PEPC webpage](#). Source: [Augusta Free Press](#).

- *Yellowstone NP* – Delaware North has purchased the Best Western by Mammoth Hot Springs – the chain’s fifth area hotel. The property includes the 23-cabin Jim Bridger Motor Court, The Yellowstone Mine restaurant and the Rusty Rail Lounge & Casino, which offers a variety of video poker and keno machines. The complex also features an indoor heated pool, hot tub, saunas and gift shop. The hotel’s meeting room accommodates up to 40 people. The company began operating the facilities on June 10th. Source: [Yellowstone Insider](#).
- *Yosemite NP* – The Yosemite Valley Visitor Center is about to get its first permanent rock climbing exhibit. Fundraising has started and design firms were to be interviewed last week; the target opening date is Memorial Day next year. The exhibit will showcase the history of rock climbing in Yosemite, which started in the 1800s and includes famed conservationist John Muir. It will feature equipment used in past climbs, including hammers and ropes used by John Salathé, considered the “grandfather” of big wall climbing in Yosemite, and the climbing shoes Lynn Hill wore when she became the first person to free climb The Nose route on El Capitan in 1993. The driving force behind the exhibit is the Yosemite Climbing Association and its president, Ken Yager. Source: Carmen George, [Modesto Bee](#).

The Federal Government

The Administration

News from the administration of consequence to federal land management and environmental protection agencies and to their employees.

- *Another Shot At Federal Employees* – The May 26th *Washington Post* has an editorial entitled “The Latest Trump Challenge To An Independent Civil Service.” It concerns the administration’s plan to eliminate OPM and to split its functions among three other agencies. Under the proposal, OPM’s policy duties go to the Office of Management and Budget within the White House. Here’s the kicker: “OPM exists to protect a nonpartisan civil service from politicization. Under the Trump plan, submitted to Congress this month, responsibility for formulating and approving rules about hiring, firing and more would go to a political appointee whose position would not require Senate confirmation. The government needs dedicated individuals to carry out its core responsibilities based on merit and expertise, not based on whether a president or anyone else approves of their voting preferences, yet this restructuring risks exactly that.” Source: Editorial Board, [Washington Post](#).
- *President Orders Reduction In Number Of Advisory Boards* – The president signed an executive order on June 14th that directs every federal agency to evaluate the need for all of its advisory committees created under the Federal Advisory Committee Act. It gives agency heads until September to terminate at least one-third of current committees created by agency heads. “The White House did not immediately provide any justification for the order,” reports *Time*. “But it appears to assume that many of the committees are redundant or have been convened to address issues that are now obsolete. It says that committees will be eliminated if their ‘stated objectives’ have been accomplished, if the ‘subject matter or work of the committee has become obsolete,’ if their ‘primary functions have been assumed by another entity’ and if the agency determines ‘the cost of operation is excessive in relation to the benefits to the Federal Government.’” The full text of the executive order can be read [at this link](#). Source: Jill Colvin, [Time](#).

Department of the Interior

News about DOI policies, practices and people.

- *DOI LE Case Referrals To DOJ Drop Precipitously* – The following comes from the June 13th edition of *The Hill*: “The number of criminal environmental enforcement cases brought by the Interior Department has decreased by nearly 40 percent since 2016, according to internal data

shared with *The Hill*. Criminal environmental cases that often deal with unlicensed big-game hunting, illegal drug running, or oil and gas theft have all dropped to an almost 25-year low, according to the Interior data.” The cause is evidently the drop in the number of law enforcement officers in Interior, with numbers at the NPS and BLM at an all-time low. Cases referred by DOI to DOJ dropped from 835 in 2000 to 132 last year; the number of cases ultimately taken up by the DOJ to prosecute has also significantly decreased, dropping from 644 in 2007 to 161 last year. The article includes this observation from PEER’s Jeff Ruch: “America’s natural resource heritage is at a growing risk of being looted with fewer cops on the beat inside agencies that are starving by attrition. While there is growing attention to the infrastructure gap for capital improvements on national parks and other federal lands, we also need to start looking at the escalating human capital needs of these land management agencies.” Source: Miranda Green, [The Hill](#).

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 Current Crisis – Reports on the national and international climate and conservation crisis.

- *Extreme Heat Waves Increasing Worldwide* – A [report on extreme heat in the Northern Hemisphere in 2018](#) appears in [Earth’s Future](#), a journal that deals with “the science of the Anthropocene and predictions of our common future.” It concludes that last year’s heat wave epidemic “would not have occurred without human-induced climate change” and that they will occur more often in the future – perhaps regularly. In the summer of 2018, exceptional heat affected 22 percent of the populated and agricultural areas of the Northern Hemisphere between the months of May and July. The contiguous United States witnessed its hottest May on record, California endured its hottest July and numerous European cities notched their highest temperatures ever recorded, while cities in Asia, the Middle East and Africa also established new heat milestones. Writing in the *Washington Post*, reporter Jason Samenow notes that “there are signs record-setting heat waves are beginning anew this summer — signaling, perhaps, that these exceptional and widespread heat spells are now the norm.” Such heat waves have already been reported in India, Japan and the U.S. West Coast, among other locations. Source Jason Samenow, [Washington Post](#).
- “*Ferocious Start*” To Canadian Fire Season – “Wildfire season in Canada — at least as destructive as in the United States — is off to a ferocious start,” reported the *Washington Post* on June 11th. “Eighty-seven fires were burning in seven provinces and two territories Monday, forcing 4,415 people from their homes...As the Canadian north grows warmer and drier for longer periods, the destruction is expected to get worse. Wildfires are now scorching more than 6 million acres of land here per year. That’s twice what they burned in the 1970s — and it’s projected to double again by the end of the century...Environment and Climate Change Canada, a government agency, reported this year that Canada is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world, and much of it is ‘effectively irreversible.’ Climate change will make some parts of Canada hotter, drier and more prone to lightning, scientists say. It will melt snow pack faster and dry out fuels such as nettles, grasses and leaves. It also acts as a threat multiplier for other drivers of shifting wildfire activity. Climate change has helped spread a mountain pine beetle epidemic, which has weakened trees across nearly 47 million acres of forest in Canada, making them more susceptible to blazes.” Source: Amanda Coletta, [Washington Post](#).
- *Plant Extinctions Increasing* – Researchers have found that nearly 600 plant extinctions have taken place over the last two and a half centuries, according to a new paper published in *Nature Ecology and Evolution*. The 571 proven plant extinctions lost since 1753 is twice the number of animal species lost in the same time frame and nearly four times as many plants lost as botanists recently estimated. The researchers with the Royal Botanic Gardens in the UK

and Stockholm University also noted that many plant species have likely disappeared without anyone ever knowing about them, pushing the true number of extinctions much higher. The main culprit is human activity, such as clear cutting forests for timber and converting land into fields for agriculture. Source: Jordan Davidson, [EcoWatch](#).

Combatting The Crises – Reports on efforts to ameliorate or check critical climate and conservation issues.

- *Offshore Wind Energy Boom In Northeast* – “Get ready for some big announcements of U.S. offshore wind projects,” reports *Clean Economy Weekly*. Massachusetts is moving forward with a plan to contract for 1,600 megawatts of offshore wind, doubling the amount already in progress; the action is based on a report showing that doubling the state’s offshore wind program would save consumers between \$670 million and \$1.27 billion over 20 years compared to purchasing the same amount of land-based renewable energy on the market. Connecticut has passed a measure that requires that the state develop 2,000 megawatts of energy from offshore wind, building on existing plans to receive power from several projects already in development. And New York is close to announcing specifics of how it will follow through on its plan to develop 9,000 megawatts of offshore wind power. Source: Dan Gearino, [Clean Economy Weekly](#).

National Park System Issues

Climate Change – News concerning the impacts of climate change on park lands, waters, species and other assets.

- *Glen Canyon NRA* – There’s good short-term news for Lake Powell. The lake is benefitting considerably from this year’s runoff, which is running about 128% of average due to the melting of the abundant snow that fell in the Rockies this past winter. The lake’s level has risen 16 feet, but that’s only a small step toward recovery, as it was about 140 feet below normal coming into this season. The last time Lake Powell was essentially full – 97% of capacity – was in 1999. The lake hit an all-time low in 2005, when it was 145 feet below full pool. Source: Josh Carter, [The Daily Universe](#).

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:

- *Great Sand Dunes NP&P* – The NPS and Colorado Parks and Wildlife will soon kick off a major effort to restore Rio Grande cutthroat trout in Upper Sand Creek Lake, Lower Sand Creek Lake and in Sand Creek. The project is tentatively scheduled to start the last week of August. To reestablish the native cutthroats, the lakes and creek will be treated with Rotenone, an EPA-approved organic chemical that has been used for decades in Colorado and elsewhere for aquatic management projects. The chemical will kill all the non-native trout. If the treatment is successful, the earliest the area could be restocked with Rio Grande cutthroat would be the fall of 2020. Source: [Patch](#).
- *Golden Gate NRA* – The Salmon Protection And Watershed Network (SPAWN), a program of the national environmental organization Turtle Island Restoration Network, was recently awarded a grant for the second phase of a project aimed at improving habitat for endangered salmon on park lands along Lagunitas Creek. The project aims to recover a lost floodplain that has been buried under dirt that was dumped in the creek corridor decades ago to build the now-abandoned and removed village of Jewell. The project will remove 6,000 cubic yards of fill, concrete, and construction rubble, add several pieces of large woody debris, replace non-native invasive plants with native species, and create critical side-channel habitats for coho salmon and other endangered species. Source: [Turtle Island Restoration Project](#).

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

- *Big Cypress NP* – The park is employing a new tactic in its ongoing war against invasive pythons – the use of “Judas” snakes. A fundamental problem in keeping up with the python's assault on Florida is the snake's ability to remain out of sight. Researchers have determined that the most successful approach is to locate – if you can – and remove breeding females. To do so, radio transmitters are surgically inserted into captured males. The pythons are released back into the wild to act as spies, hence their nickname "Judas snakes." During the December-through-April breeding season, the males lead researchers to the females. But they have a long way to go – over the last two seasons, the Judas snake method has enabled Big Cypress staff to remove 17 pythons — out of an estimated tens of thousands living there. Source: Ed Killer, [Treasure Coast Palm](#).
- *Everglades NP* – The above article also includes a passage which includes data on the toll taken by pythons in Everglades. A [2012 USGS study](#) revealed that the snakes had contributed to the dramatic declines in a number of species – 99.3% fewer raccoons, 98.9% fewer opossums, 87.5% fewer bobcats, and nearly 100% of foxes and marsh and cottontail rabbits. There's also strong evidence that Florida's bird, native snake and iconic alligator populations are also suffering as they “eat their way across” the state. Source: Ed Killer, [Treasure Coast Palm](#).

Ecosystems and Habitat – News about actions that affect park and adjoining ecosystems and habitat:

- *Biscayne NP* – Miami-Dade County researchers who conducted a study of the decline of seagrass and “hardbottom habitat” in Biscayne Bay have found that 93% of the bay’s seagrass is now dead (the full report can be read [at this link](#)). The bay has historically been an estuary where freshwater flows from the Florida mainland and then mixes with saltwater from the Atlantic Ocean. This creates a unique ecosystem consisting of mangrove, freshwater and saltwater marsh habitats. But over time, most of the bay’s natural tributaries have been dredged and channelized, and canals have been created that release water directly, mostly farther north, to prevent flooding in developed areas. The drop in freshwater has led to increased salinity and the death of seagrass, a vital part of the park’s ecosystem. The county has ordered “crash studies” to get a better understanding of the problem and to find solutions. Source: Rumya Sundaram, [Key News](#).

External Issues – Management issues related to usage or development in culturally or naturally sensitive areas abutting parks.

- *Yellowstone NP* – “It's considered one of the most important land protection questions involving the core of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem in a few generations,” reports *Mountain Journal*. “Now, some of the biggest and most influential names in American landscape conservation are calling upon the U.S. Forest Service to protect a wide swath of the Gallatin Mountains in southwest Montana—a biological puzzle piece considered central to the health of the most iconic large mammal ecosystem in the Lower 48 states... Greater Yellowstone, encompassing more than 22 million acres, is an unparalleled complex of wildlife-rich public wildlands in the West mixed with private property. But not all of its pieces are equal. The Gallatins, which function as a crossroads, are wilder than most national parks and vulnerable to being impacted by growing numbers of people moving to the region and others using it as a playground. Moreover, researchers note that going forward the Gallatins will play a vital role in serving as a refuge for species struggling against the effects of encroaching development and dramatic alterations to habitat brought by climate change.” See the article for more on the debate going on regarding how much of the Gallatins should be protected. Source: Todd Wilkinson, [Mountain Journal](#).
- *Theodore Roosevelt NP* – A state judge has ruled that North Dakota regulators properly refrained from becoming involved in a dispute over the location of an \$800 million oil refinery being developed near the park. The Public Service Commission last year declined to review whether the Davis Refinery could be built just three miles from the park, concluding its production capacity will be too small to warrant review under state law. Environmental groups

don't believe developer Meridian Energy is being forthright about the refinery's capacity.

Source: [KFGO News](#).

- *Chaco Culture NHP* – There have been two significant developments in the protracted efforts to protect culturally significant lands around the park. The first came last month, when the federal 10th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that BLM needs to reconsider how drilling permits could impact natural resources in the area around the park. The decision comes in a case first filed in 2015. A few weeks later, Secretary Bernhardt agreed to defer oil and gas leasing within a ten-mile radius of the park for at least a year after touring the area with Senator Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.). Said the secretary: "I walked away with a greater sense of appreciation of the magnificent site managed by the National Park Service and a better understanding of tribal leaders' views of its cultural significance. We will take appropriate action to defer leasing within the ten-mile buffer during the next year, and we will respect the role of Congress under the property clause of the constitution to determine how particular lands held by the federal government should be managed." Sources: Mark Brodie, [KJZZ News](#); Scott Streater, E&E News.
- *Carlsbad Cavern NP* – On June 3rd, WildEarth Guardians filed a lawsuit in federal court against BLM over drilling near Carlsbad Caverns. That area, known as the Permian Basin is now considered the world's second most productive oil field and is pumping billions of dollars into the state's economy. According to the lawsuit, the park's fragile cave system is at risk, along with the surrounding wildlife and already-deteriorating air quality. They claim proper environmental studies were not conducted before granting leases. Source: Francesca Washington, [KRQE News](#).

The Coalition

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

- *Hydraulic Fracking* – CPANP submitted extensive comments (with partners) regarding BLM's draft SEIS on hydraulic fracking in southern California. They speak to our concerns regarding the potential direct, indirect or cumulative impacts of such fracking on eleven separate federal public land sites adjacent to the planning region. [Click on this link](#) to read our statement and specific comments.
- *Potential Oil And Gas Leasing Impacts On Chaco Canyon NHP* – The Coalition has posted a "success story" regarding our efforts to date in opposing BLM's efforts to open culturally sensitive areas around the park to oil and gas development. [Click on this link](#) to read it.

Source: Emily Thompson, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator.

Park People

NPS Alumni Passing Of Larry Aten

Larry Aten, a career NPS archeologist who played a key role in laying the foundations for the public policies and professional practices that underpin the Service's of the National Historic Preservation Act, passed away on June 11th.

Larry was brought into the NPS in 1972 to launch and implement Presidential Executive Order 11593, "Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment". Later, as deputy chief of the NPS interagency archeological services division, he developed the Service's federal salvage archeology program. In the early 1980s, he was asked to prepare the World Heritage Site nomination for Cahokia Mounds east of St. Louis in Illinois, which was subsequently accepted by UNESCO. As offshore leasing in the Gulf of Mexico was ramping up, he organized and worked to have submerged archeological

resources recognized by the federal leasing agency. The effort was successful, and today standard leases require that such resources be taken into account by lessees.

From 1983 to 1994, Larry served as NPS chief of the interagency resources division in Washington, D.C., overseeing and establishing public policy for such nationally-recognized programs as the more than \$30 million annual appropriations to the Historic Preservation Fund, the National Register of Historic Places, the Resource Protection Planning Process (known as RP3), the American Battlefield Protection Program, the Cultural Resources Geographic Information Systems Unit (a pioneering GIS operation that oftentimes served parks), the Certified Local Government Program, and heritage programs targeted to Indian Tribes, Alaska Natives, and Pacific Islanders.

During this time, Larry served as executive director of the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission, a Congressionally-chartered, 14-member entity that was composed of several members of Congress and eminent Civil War historians such as Pulitzer Prize recipient James M. McPherson, NPS chief historian Ed Bearss, and others with deep knowledge of the Civil War, including PBS filmmaker Ken Burns. Larry authored the commission's unanimously-adopted 1993 report. Widely praised, it continues to guide Congressional and state policies.

Larry and his wife, Carol Aten, also an NPS alumni, lived in Washington, DC. Larry is survived by two children and four grandchildren.

Source: [Coalition to Protect America's National Parks](#).

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:

- *Intermountain Region* – Chip Jenkins, superintendent at Mount Rainier, will be serving as acting regional director. Chip previously served as deputy RD in Pacific West Region, as superintendent of North Cascades, and as superintendent at Lewis and Clark. He'll be acting in that position while the NPS finds a permanent RD. Source: Memo from NPS deputy director to NLC.
- *Grand Canyon NP* – Woody Smeck, who is currently superintendent at Sequoia-Kings Canyon, will be the acting superintendent at Grand Canyon. Before that, he was deputy superintendent at Yosemite and superintendent of Santa Monica Mountains. Like Chip, he will be serving in an acting capacity while a search is conducted for a permanent superintendent for the park. Source: Memo from NPS deputy director to NLC.
- *Booker T. Washington NM* – Robin Snyder has been selected as the park's new superintendent. She will also remain superintendent of Appomattox Court House, where she has worked since 2015. A native of Appomattox, she previously held positions at New River Gorge and Petersburg and in NERO. Source: [National Park Service](#).
- *Yellowstone NP* – Leslie Reynolds began a term as the park's acting chief ranger on June 18th, replacing outgoing chief ranger Pete Webster, who recently transferred to Glacier as that park's deputy superintendent. Reynolds will serve in that position throughout the summer and fall. She has wide-ranging experience, having served for the past seven years as the chief ranger of Cape Cod National Seashore and previously as chief ranger of Shenandoah National Park, Valley district ranger in Yosemite National Park, and a multitude of other field leadership positions, including night shift supervisor in Yosemite Valley. Source: [Yellowstone Insider](#).
- *Fort Stanwix NM* – Kevin Wyrick has been selected as the park's new superintendent. Wyrick currently serves as chief of operations at Ocmulgee Mounds, where he oversees law enforcement and emergency services, interpretation and education, resource stewardship and management and administration. Source: [Rome Sentinel](#).

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.

- *Lake Mead NRA* – The park had a very busy Memorial Day weekend, with over 200,000 people visiting the area over the three-day period. One indicator of the degree of activity: Visitors had to wait for up to an hour and a half to retrieve their boats from the water at the park's launch ramps. Lake Mead's 40 commissioned rangers (down 11 from the authorized level) were augmented by officers and personnel from the Nevada Department of Wildlife, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Bullhead Police Department, and the U.S. Coast Guard. The park volunteer staff also provided excellent support by keeping traffic moving and providing information to visitors at launch ramps. Over the course of the weekend, rangers issued 222 violation notices (many more were given by Nevada and Arizona officers) and made 41 arrests. Among the latter were 15 arrests for drunk driving, eight arrests for possession or sale of a controlled substance, four fugitive warrant arrests, and one murder warrant arrest. Rangers also responded to 85 water rescues, 20 EMS incidents, 13 boating and two motor vehicle accidents, 10 larcenies, two burglaries, two vehicle thefts, two weapons violations, and a boat fire. Submitted by Bud Inman.
- *Gulf Island NS* – The third annual Ship Island Boater's Rendezvous and Blessing of the Fleet took place in the park on Sunday, June 5th. Approximately 5,000 people on 700 boats attended the event, which is held at Ship Island, located about a dozen miles off the coast in the park's Mississippi District. Local businessmen sponsored the event, which included a rock and roll band, a hula-hoop contest, men's and women's bikini contests, and the blessing of the fleet by a Catholic bishop. The sponsors were required to meet comprehensive and detailed permit conditions in order to ensure public safety, resource protection, and adequate sanitation during the event. One visitor was killed on the evening before the event in a personal watercraft accident. Numerous minor law enforcement actions were taken, but only one arrest was made. Rain and heavily overcast skies kept alcohol consumption down, a prime reason for the lack of serious incidents. Severe thunderstorms threatened the event during the afternoon, but did not strike the island; this was providential, as the accompanying strong winds would have caused major problems for the 700 boats anchored within the half-mile stretch of beach where the event was held. Law enforcement officers from the Coast Guard, state, and local sheriff's department assisted rangers on the event, which was managed under the incident command system. Submitted by District Ranger Mark Lewis.
- *Great Smoky Mountains NP* – On May 31st, a ranger stopped an 18-wheeler at Newfound Gap, cited the driver for illegal commercial use of the highway, turned the rig around, and sent it back down the Newfound Gap Road on the North Carolina side of the park. As the truck headed down the road, its brakes became hot and ineffective and it attained speeds of up to 50 mph as it passed through sharp curves. The driver decided to drive the truck into the west road shoulder and up the hillside in order to stop it. The truck subsequently jack-knifed across both lanes of traffic and rolled onto its top, spilling its load of 25,000 feet of hardwood flooring along 500 feet of the highway. The road was closed for five and a half hours while the rig was removed from the scene. The driver was treated and released from a local hospital that evening. It took the truck company two days to complete the roadside lumber salvage operation. There are multiple signs posted at all entrances advising that the park's roads are closed to commercial traffic. Submitted by Assistant Chief Ranger Dave Panebaker.

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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

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

"Visits to national park areas have multiplied threefold in less than a generation. Far more of us than ever before walk in wilderness now and time-travel in history simultaneously. As we enjoy and save our parks, building their defenses in our hearts, the parks help save us. Interconnections form in our depths. The pattern of the whole grows stronger. We hear again the great orchestra of earth and life, and our spirits begin again to sing, tentatively yet, but more and more in harmony."

[Darwin Lambert](#), cited in *National Parks in Crisis*, 1982

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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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- *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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