



The Coalition Weekly Report Wednesday, July 24, 2019

Volume 3

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Editor's Note

Due to time constraints, most of CWR's regular sections are not included in this issue. There will be a full edition on July 31st.

Incidents

Olympic NP SAR Personnel Rescue Man From Elwha River

A man who tried to take his bicycle across the Elwha River was rescued by emergency crews after the fast-moving river swept him away and carried him downstream.

The unidentified man, reportedly in his 50s or 60s, was plucked off an island in the river by a regional swiftwater rescue team more than three hours after he was swept down the waterway. The man still had his bike. Although he was not injured, he was taken to Olympic Medical Center as a precaution.

Witnesses saw the man get carried down the river late on the morning of July 9th and advised park staff. Initial efforts to find him by SAR crews proved fruitless, so a Life Flight Network air ambulance was summoned to assist. The helicopter's crew spotted him on an island and rescuers got him to shore by about 3 p.m.

Source: Paul Gottlieb, [Peninsula Daily News](#).

Grand Teton NP Seriously Injured Hiker Rescued From Paintbrush Canyon

On the afternoon of July 9th, Jarek Strzalkowski, 35, was injured in a sliding fall of over a thousand feet near Paintbrush Divide.

Strzalkowski was hiking with a friend in Paintbrush Canyon when he lost his footing and fell, sliding about 1,200 feet over snow fields and rock outcroppings toward Grizzly Bear Lake. His partner made a 911 call. Three rangers responded; they assessed his injuries and stabilized him for a short-haul extraction.

Strzalkowski was flown to Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center in Idaho Falls, Idaho, with serious injuries. His current condition is not known.

Source: [KSTP News](#).

Yellowstone NP Mount Washburn Fire Lookout Burns To Ground

The historic fire lookout on top of Mount Washburn, built in 1931, burned to the ground on Tuesday, July 16th, after being struck by lightning. The fire also damaged a radio repeater.

On Wednesday morning, three park employees, including the park fire chief, were to fly by helicopter to the 10,000-foot lookout to assess the damage. The flight, however, was postponed as the helicopter was diverted to a higher priority incident outside the park. While en route, the helicopter manager snapped a photo of the burned lookout, which by then consisted of only a few charred supports rising from the base.

Park staff attempted to fly to the lookout again on Wednesday afternoon, but the helicopter was grounded by strong winds. Additional attempts to reach the mountain were to be made later in the week.

Because of the fire the Mount Holmes Trail west of the junction with the Trilobite Lake Trail and the summit of Mount Holmes are closed. They will remain closed until the unsafe conditions are assessed, mitigated, and no longer pose a threat to public safety.

Source: [Helena Independent Record](#).

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center Numerous Large Fires Continue To Burn In Alaska

The national preparedness level remains at PL 2. Fire activity centers on the Alaska area, which is at PL 5. Activity is picking up in other western states.

Twenty uncontained large fires are being managed nationwide under full suppression strategy; another 98 are being managed using other approaches.

An RC-26 aircraft with distributed real-time infrared (DRTI) capability and support personnel from the 141st Air Refueling Wing (Washington Air National Guard) are supporting wildland fire operations in Alaska. Five wildland fire suppression crews and an interagency resource representative (IARR) are supporting large fire operations in Alberta, Canada.

No large fires were reported in NPS areas on yesterday's NICC summary.

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

- *DOI Firefighter Shortage* – According to interviews and memos obtained by the *Los Angeles Times*, the Department of the Interior is currently short about 500 firefighters. Although DOI's budget for 2019 included funding for 5,000 firefighters, the Department reports that it halted hiring with a workforce of 4,500. The *Times* was unable to determine if USFS was also understaffed. Source: Anna M. Phillips, [Los Angeles Times](#).
- *Report Finds Dramatic Increase In California Fire Size Due To Climate Change* – A [study just published in the journal *Earth's Future*](#) found that there's been a 500% increase in the amount of land burned by fires in California over the past 50 years due to the state's increasingly long and dry summers. While non-forested areas have not experienced a huge increase in fires, forested areas have seen an 800% increase in land burned. The researchers found that these trends are likely to continue as temperatures rise and rainfall decreases into the autumn. Source: Monica Medina and Miro Korenha, [Our Daily Planet](#).

Resource Commitment Trend

Category	July 2nd	July 9th	July 23rd
Area Command Teams	0	0	0
NIMO Teams	0	1	1
Type 1 Teams	1	1	2
Type 2 Teams	3	3	5
Crews	94	97	154
Engines	137	182	203
Helicopters	35	42	39
Total FF/Overhead	3,313	4,055	5,630

Fires/Acreage

Category	2019 Total	2009-2018 Ave	2019 Variance
United States: YTD Fires	24,011	35,928	- 33%
United States: YTD Acres	2,476,778	3,527,006	- 30%
Canada: YTD Fires	2,779	---	---
Canada: YTD Acres	3,984,804	---	---

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.

Note: This summary covers the weeks ending on July 12th and July 19th.

New Public Laws

July 5 – The president signed into law, 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 requests 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. (Public Law 116-28).

Senate Actions

July 17 – The nomination of Aurelia Skipwith to be director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service was transmitted to the Senate.

House Actions

July 10 – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands held a hearing, among other bills, on the following:

- H.R. 2215, to establish as a unit of the National Park System the San Gabriel National Recreation Area in the State of California.
- H.R. 2250, to provide for restoration, economic development, recreation, and conservation on Federal lands in Northern California. Of interest to the National Park Service are: Section 102, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to undertake initiatives to restore degraded redwood forest ecosystems in Redwood National and State Parks in partnership with the State of California, local agencies, and nongovernmental organizations; Section 105, to authorize the establishment of a visitor center in Del Norte County, California, to assist in fulfilling the purposes of Redwood National and State Parks and the Smith River National Recreation Area; Section 107, to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to evaluate the feasibility and suitability of establishing overnight accommodations on Federal land at the southern and northern boundaries or on land within 20 miles of the southern and northern boundaries of Redwood National and State parks in consultation with interested Federal, State, Tribal, and local entities, and private and nonprofit organizations; Section 303, to designate, among other areas, approximately 31,000 acres in Redwood National Park as potential wilderness (the department testified that it does not support the designation of potential wilderness while its work to rehabilitate forested watersheds throughout Redwood National and State Parks is in progress); Section 304, to designate, among other river segments, three segments of rivers in Redwood National Park as part of the wild and scenic rivers system.
- H.R. 2546, to designate lands in Colorado as wilderness primarily managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service as well as small portions of lands managed by the National Park Service and Bureau of Reclamation. The department testified in opposition to the bill as currently written.
- H.R. 2642, to designate and expand wilderness areas in Olympic National Forest in the State of Washington, and to designate certain rivers in Olympic National Forest and Olympic National Park as wild and scenic rivers,

Testimony was heard from public witnesses and from Frank Beum, acting associate deputy chief, National Forest System, U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, and Leah Baker, acting assistant director, resources and planning, Bureau of Land Management.

July 10 – The Committee on Science, Space, and Technology: Subcommittee on Energy approved:

- H.R. 3597, to guide and authorize basic research programs in the United States for research, development, and demonstration of solar energy technologies.
- H.R. 3607, to direct federal research in fossil energy and to promote the development and demonstration of environmentally responsible coal and natural gas technologies.
- H.R. 3609, to provide for a program of wind energy research, development, and demonstration.

July 11 – The Committee on Science, Space, and Technology held a hearing entitled “Earth's Thermometers: Glacial and Ice Sheet Melt in a Changing Climate.” Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

July 12 – The House passed H.R. 2500, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2020 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, by a recorded vote of 220 ayes to 197 noes. Division B, Subtitle F, authorizes the establishment of the 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. The full text of the House-passed bill was unavailable as of press time. Any further NPS-related provisions will be reported once the final text is available.

July 15 – The House passed H. Res. 345, a resolution responding to widening threats to freedom of the press and expression around the world, reaffirming the centrality of a free and independent press to the health of democracy, and reaffirming freedom of the press as a priority of the United States in promoting democracy, human rights, and good governance on World Press Freedom Day (which was May 3).

July 16 – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held a hearing entitled “Oil and Gas Development: Impacts of Business-as-Usual on the Climate and Public Health.” Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

July 16 – The Select Committee on the Climate Crisis held a hearing entitled “Solving the Climate Crisis: Cleaning Up Heavy Duty Vehicles, Protecting Communities.” Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

July 17 – The House passed H.R. 736, to require the Director of the Government Publishing Office to establish and maintain an online portal accessible to the public that allows the public to obtain electronic copies of all congressionally mandated reports in one place.

July 17 – The Committee on Natural Resources approved, among other bills, the following:

- H.R. 1373, to withdraw 1,006,545 acres of federal lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management in northern Arizona, surrounding Grand Canyon National Park, including any land or interest in land acquired by the United States after enactment of this bill, from entry, appropriation, and disposal under the public land laws; location, entry, and patent under the mining laws; and operation of the mineral leasing and geothermal leasing laws and mineral materials laws.
- H.R. 2181, to withdraw certain federal lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management in northern New Mexico, surrounding Chaco Canyon National Historical Park, Aztec Ruins National Monument, and 39 Chaco Culture Archeological Protection Sites designated in 1995, from entry, appropriation, and disposal under the public land laws; location, entry, and patent under the mining laws; and operation of the mineral leasing and geothermal leasing laws and mineral materials laws.

July 17 – The Committee on Science, Space, and Technology Subcommittee on Research and Technology; and Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight held a joint hearing entitled “Scientific Integrity in Federal Agencies.” Testimony was heard from John Neumann, managing director for science, technology assessment and analytics, Government Accountability Office, and public witnesses.

July 18 – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife held a hearing on H.R. 2245, to amend the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to prohibit import and export of any species listed or proposed to be listed under such Act as a threatened species or endangered species, and for other purposes. Testimony was heard from Chairman Grijalva and public witnesses.

July 18 – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands held a hearing, among other bills, on the following:

- H.R. 1492, to revise the boundaries of the Yucca House National Monument in Colorado to include 160 acres of land.
- H.R. 1562, to require the Secretary of the Interior, and such other agencies and instrumentalities as the Secretary determines appropriate, to support a robust program of intramural and extramural botanical science research as relevant and appropriate to support the Department’s land management responsibilities.
- H.R. 2819, to extend through January 2, 2027, the authority of the Gold Star Mothers National Monument Foundation to establish a commemorative work in Washington, D.C. in honor of Gold Star families.

Testimony was heard from public witnesses and from William Shaddox, chief of the Land Resources Division for the National Park Service, and Frank Beum, acting associate deputy chief, National Forest System, U.S. Forest Service.

[From The Archives](#)

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

- *Jefferson NEM (now Gateway Arch NP)* – The 14th Annual Veiled Prophet Fair was held on and adjacent to the park on the weekend from July 1st to the 4th. The United States Olympic Festival Game's opening ceremony was held on the grounds on the evening of the 1st; 2,500 athletes took part, and there was a very large contingent of press and spectators. Over the following three days, huge crowds came to see such entertainers as the Beach Boys, Aretha Franklin and Travis Tritt at free concerts. Temperatures were in the high 90s with very high humidity; 300 people were treated for heat-related problems over the weekend. The park's staff, three Midwest Region special events teams and a North Atlantic Region special events team managed the event under the incident command system. Despite the size of the crowds, only 26 citations were issued and nine arrests made. At one point, about 2,000 people were involved in a near riot off park property. City police requested and received assistance in dispersing the crowd from the park's horse mounted patrol unit. Submitted by Chief Ranger Deryl Stone.
- *Yellowstone NP* – Two men in their early 30s were riding mules off-trail in the Sulphur Mountain area in Hayden Valley on July 17th. Following a short break, one of the men opted to walk and lead his mule, while the other remained mounted. As they were moving up the side of a hill away from some grazing bison, the man who was walking heard his friend yell "Bear, bear!" just before he was struck, knocked down and mauled by a bear. The mounted man charged twice with his mule before the bear finally discontinued its attack and moved off. His companion received lacerations to the back of his head, hands and legs, but was able to remount his mule and ride out to a road. He was picked up by park visitors and taken to Lake Hospital, where he was treated before being taken to Wyoming Medical Center in Cody for additional care. All areas on the south side of Hayden Valley are temporarily closed to all hiking. The closure includes the Mary Mountain Trail, Trout Creek, and the area above Nez Perce Creek. This is the third bear mauling in Yellowstone this season. Submitted by PIO Marsha Karle.
- *Lake Mead NRA* – On July 14th, a 19-year-old Las Vegas man admitted himself to Boulder City Hospital for treatment of a gunshot wound received while in the park. He and five of his friends, members of a large gang known as the Flip Side Phenoï gang, were reportedly fishing in the El Dorado Canyon area of Lake Mohave, a remote location 25 miles south of Boulder City. Two other fishermen were about 50 feet away when they arrived in the area around 2 a.m., but members of the injured man's group said that no words were exchanged with them. About ten minutes after their arrival, one of the two fishermen opened fire on them; the second fisherman soon removed a gun from his tackle box and also opened fire. The injured man felt a bullet strike him in the arm and jumped into the water. His assailants fled the area, stopping long enough to smash the windows of the two vehicles belonging to the man's group. Investigating rangers discovered ten spent .22 shell casings and one .25 shell casing at the scene. The two assailants are believed to belong to a rival gang called The International Brotherhood of Phenoï" Submitted by Chief Ranger Bud Inman.

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- Regular Correspondents: Don Hellmann, Dennis Burnett, Rick Smith, and Duncan Morrow
- Issue Contributors: Mike Warren

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

"The conservation movement has so long been identified with the perpetuation of things that its spiritual and idealistic content has been overlooked. To my mind, that constitutes its very essence. Conservation expresses generosity towards future generations, as opposed to the selfishness of the older and rejected policy. It represents economy in the use of our physical heritage, as opposed to the destructive extravagance of the old system. It cultivates love of beauty in nature and subordinates utilitarian objectives. Above all, it represents to me not only the conservation of our physical heritage, but the preservation and development of our spiritual energies."

[Senator Robert F. Wagner](#)

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The *Weekly National Park System Report* is a publication of The Coalition To Protect America's National Parks. It is prepared by Coalition member Bill Halainen, former editor of the *NPS Morning Report*, and produced and disseminated by Coalition member Steve Pittleman.

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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