



The Coalition Weekly Report Wednesday, January 23, 2019

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A summary of activities pertaining to the National Park Service and the National Park System, produced and disseminated by the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks.

Volume 3

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Incidents

National Park System

Day 33: The Government Shutdown Rolls On

The shutdown continues and the National Park Service continues to be its poster child. Some of the myriad reports on the agency and its employees that have come out over the past week follow.

The Shutdown – Articles pertaining to the shutdown as it has affected employees, federal agencies, and the NPS in particular:

- *Second Furlough Notice, Second Missed Check* – The shutdown has now dragged past the 30-day mark. “That means the furlough notices most federal workers currently sent home without pay received on Dec. 21 will expire,” reports *Government Executive*. “Due to a quirk in federal statute, furlough notices can only last for a month. Most of the 300,000 employees still furloughed received a message at the start of the shutdown that read: ‘This furlough is not expected to exceed 30 days. Therefore, it expires on Jan. 21.’ According to guidance from the Office of Personnel Management, agencies should treat a shutdown passing the 30-day mark as resetting the clock. ‘When the shutdown furlough goes beyond 30 days, agencies should treat it as a second shutdown furlough and issue another adverse action or furlough notice,’ OPM said, which also clarified that reductions in force would not take place as part of any shutdown.” Source: Eric Katz, [Government Executive](#).
- *Bill Would Offer No Interest Loans To Feds* – “A bill introduced by newly-elected Rep. TJ Cox, D-Calif... would offer employees at shuttered agencies a no-interest loan of up to \$6,000 to help pay mortgages and cover bills for other necessities,” says *Government Executive*. “A credit check would not be necessary in order to qualify, and the amount of the loan would be automatically deducted from the recipient’s paycheck once government reopens.” The article also notes that excepted employees working during the shutdown have always been guaranteed compensation once the appropriations lapse is resolved, and a bill the president signed last week extends that guarantee to furloughed employees as well. The bill had 70 Democratic co-sponsors as of last Thursday. Source: Amelia Gruber, [Government Executive](#).
- *‘Jerks’ Invade Parks* – *Yahoo! News* ran a story on January 17th with this arresting headline: “America’s most stunning jerks are flocking to your national parks. Who are they?” The lead sentence reads as follows: “Like an unlocked museum, national parks have been left largely

defenseless during the most recent government shutdown, allowing scoundrels and cheats to tramp over unstaffed lands.” Along with some pithy characterizations of such people, the article examines possible causes, including “a kind of radical antigovernment individualism” and a feeling that some adults have that they “enjoy special advantages in social relations out of an entrenched sense of entitlement that immunizes [them] against the complaints of other people.” Source: Mark Kaufman, [Yahoo! News](#).

- *Keeping Parks Open Violates The Law* – “In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed an act calling for national parks to remain ‘unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations,’ reports *Business Insider*. “More than a century later, environmentalists are accusing the Trump administration of violating that act by allowing parks to remain open during the government shutdown... During prior government shutdowns, administrations have suspended all operations at parks, including visitor access. In an unorthodox move, the Trump administration has opted to leave gates open to the public. The NPCA [has] called the decision ‘reckless’ and ‘illegal,’ arguing that it violates at least four separate provisions of federal law...While most parks have managed to avoid shutting down entirely, many have closed their campgrounds due to health and safety concerns. Both the NPCA and park rangers agree that the solution would be to close the parks for the remainder of the shutdown.” The article closes with this comment from a representative of NPCA: “It’s gotten to the point where businesses and people and communities surrounding parks are now urging that parks be closed. They understand that our parks are not just for short-term gain. They are for long-term preservation and the enjoyment of the American people.” Source: Aria Bendix, [Business Insider](#).
- *Long-Lasting Impacts To Desert Parks* – Although many parks have seen abuses to public lands, including off-road driving and illegal camping, reports *Popular Science*, “some of the longest-lasting impacts of unregulated trampling, driving, and camping might be the least obvious...Desert ecosystems are slow-growing, starved of nutrients and water. Trampled desert plants take much longer to recover than forest vegetation. Desert soil may look sandy, dry, and uninhabitable—a lifeless rock dust. But a large part of it is covered by a living layer, called a biological soil crust, made up of some combination of cyanobacteria, fungi, algae, and mosses.” Recovery could take “from tens of years to hundreds of years.” Source: Ula Chrobak, [Popular Science](#).

NPS Friends and Neighbors – Articles on citizens doing what they can to lend a hand to the parks and their employees:

- *California Chips In* – On January 18th, National Public Radio ran a piece on California defying the federal government and offering unemployment benefits to furloughed federal workers: “California Gov. Gavin Newsom says the Trump administration has told states they can’t offer unemployment benefits to federal employees who are required to report to work without pay during the government shutdown. Newsom called a letter sent to states by the U.S. Department of Labor ‘jaw-dropping and extraordinary’ as he met with TSA workers at the Sacramento International Airport Thursday afternoon. ‘So, the good news is, we’re going to do it, and shame on them.’ The governor explained that California will offer the workers unemployment coverage, despite the federal government telling the state it can’t do so for workers still on the job. Newsom says he believes California is on strong legal footing.” Source: Ben Adler and Nadine Sebai, [National Public Radio](#).
- *So Does Utah* – The State of Utah paid more than \$66,000 to federal workers to provide custodial operations and work in visitor centers, park stores and some campgrounds in four national parks in the state between December 21st and January 11th (the story was posted on January 14th, so does not cover the period since then). Rangers were also paid with state money; they are safeguarding park roads and resources in Arches, Zion, and Bryce Canyon NPs. A handful of employees were also on the job in Canyonlands NP. Counties, cities, and nongovernmental organizations are also kicking in some funds. Zion facilities remain open thanks to donations from Washington County, St. George, and the Zion National Park Forever Project. Canyonlands Natural History Association is providing funding for Arches and

Canyonlands. Bryce Canyon Natural History Association is helping fund operations in that park. Source: [Bloomberg Environment](#).

- *Shutdown Impacts Park Gateway Community* – An opinion piece in the January 15th edition of the *New York Times* focuses on the impacts that the shutdown has had on businesses in one community abutting a national park – Estes Park, adjacent to Rocky Mountain NP. The government shutdown has “upended the economy of this town and created apprehension and uncertainty.” Several business owners are quoted, all of whom express anger and frustration over what they see as a shutdown caused by one person. Closing observation by the writer: “[The] shutdown continues, with local residents and local economies held hostage to something as puerile and idiotic as a temper tantrum over a wholly unrelated issue. The calm, the silence and even the damned wind here seems more profound and beautiful now, like a shining light against the chaos and dysfunction of Washington.” Source: Kelly Cordes, [New York Times](#).
- *Nonprofit Supports Employees* – No doubt you’ve frequently seen footage of piles of food and/or clothing and other supplies being gathered for victims of disasters. You can now add the NPS to the list. The Charlottesville-based Shenandoah National Park Trust is collecting packaged snack foods for park employees who are working without pay during the shutdown; local citizens are being invited to contribute items. Members of the trust have been working overtime to support the park and its employees, and the nonprofit is also raising emergency funds to keep bathrooms operational at two of the park’s most popular areas. Source: Hailey Wilt, [WVIR News](#).
- *LL Bean Steps In* – The company is looking at providing financial support to national parks for recovery from the shutdown. The Freeport outdoor gear retailer announced Wednesday that it gave away \$4 million last year in charitable donations, including \$2.8 million through its new Outdoor Access Fund. Major beneficiaries include the National Park Foundation and the Trust for Public Land, both of which support public access to the outdoors. Bean said it has contacted NPF about directing some of its pledged amount for 2019 toward a park restoration fund. The expectation, said the company, is that the need for park restoration work will grow this year because of the government shutdown. Some parks have reported damage during the shutdown because park workers are not on the job to oversee use by the public. Source: Edward Murphy, [Portland Press-Herald](#).
- *PayPal Joins Other Groups In Supporting Employees* – On January 18th, *USA Today* carried an opinion piece from the president and CEO of PayPal on what his organization – and other business organizations – are doing to help federal employees: “The PayPal community is proud to stand alongside AT&T, Kraft, Hyundai and many other companies to offer assistance to our federal government workers who contribute so much to our public sector. Starting immediately, PayPal is offering an interest-free cash advance up to \$500, the equivalent of one week’s take home [the nationwide average for all federal workers], for any existing or new PayPal Credit customers who are federal employees and are struggling to make ends meet. We are committing to fund up to \$25 million of interest-free cash advances to help federal government employees pay for food, gas and other everyday necessities. We hope that this program can provide some relief and certainty in uncertain times.” Source: Dan Schulman, [USA Today](#).

NPS And DOI – Information on how these two agencies are dealing with the shutdown:

- *DOI Issues Ethics Guidance* – The Department of the Interior has posted guidance on one of its web pages entitled “Ethics Considerations, Including Outside Employment, During a Furlough.” Furloughed employees are reminded that they still have to follow all applicable ethics laws and regulations, including the Standards of Ethical Conduct, the criminal conflicts of interest statutes, and the Hatch Act. “In particular, employees are reminded that the provisions regarding outside employment and activities continue to apply. Outside work or activities are generally permitted unless they are prohibited by statute or regulation, or would conflict with the employees official duties. A DOI-wide regulation requires all employees to obtain written approval from an Ethics Official prior to working for or seeking employment with

a 'prohibited source' (i.e., any non-Federal person or entity who is seeking official action from DOI; does or seeks to do business with DOI; or conducts activities regulated by DOI)." The guidance instructs employees to contact either the DOI ethics office or their agency's ethics office for further information, but also advises that there likely won't be anyone there as ethics officials are not excepted employees so are also on furlough. As the person said who sent this along to the newsletter, "you can't make this stuff up." Source: [Department of the Interior](#).

- *Acting DOI Secretary Offers Empathy – National Parks Traveler* has obtained a copy of a memo from Acting Interior Secretary David Bernhardt to all DOI employees regarding the shutdown. Bernhardt, "who makes an annual salary of almost \$190,000, says he can empathize with the tens of thousands of Interior Department employees who are not being paid during the ongoing partial government shutdown." See the article for the full text of his note. Source: Kurt Repanshek, [National Park Traveler](#).

The National Parks – Articles on the effects of the shutdown on several specific National Park Service areas – and the ad hoc and often inconsistent ways in which they're being managed during the shutdown:

- *Blue Ridge Parkway/Shenandoah NP* – "The parks have shuttered their information centers, locked the restrooms, closed the campgrounds, and left the public to its own devices," reports *Blue Ridge Outdoors*. "The majority of the Blue Ridge Parkway and the 40-mile stretch from the south entrance of Shenandoah National Park have remained closed and gated for over two months [due to trees that fell in a November storm]. Necessary maintenance and debris removal have halted indefinitely, leaving outdoor enthusiasts wondering when they will be able to enjoy the BRP and SNP once again." Source: [Blue Ridge Outdoors](#).
- *Cape Hatteras NS* – The park is experiencing considerable vandalism. The Outer Banks Preservation Association posted an alert about the ongoing damage last Thursday on Facebook, warning that the National Park Service could deny the public access if the damage continued. Examples cited in the posting included "human waste outside of the toilet facilities," torn up National Park Service signs, and people driving on restricted beach areas doing "doughnuts in the sand." On the other hand, the North Carolina Beach Buggy Association is among the groups stepping up to help at the park; they staged an "emergency" cleanup of beaches on Hatteras Island last week, using volunteers to pick up trash. Source: Mark Price, [The Charlotte Observer](#).
- *Colorado NM* – A story in the January 13th edition of the *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel* reports on the shutdown's effect on the park via an interview with its chief ranger, Mark Davison, who, as the paper says in its headline, "is still on mission." This is the seventh and longest shutdown that Davison has experienced in his 32-year career. The reporter details the tasks that he and his fellow "essential" employees are performing during the shutdown, and ends by noting that he's been "pleasantly surprised" to find that the park has not suffered any of the depredations that have occurred elsewhere. Source: Erin McIntyre, [Grand Junction Daily Sentinel](#).
- *Death Valley NP* – On January 16th, the park announced that some recently closed areas would once again be accessible to visitors in "coming days." Some visitor services, including campgrounds and the Stovepipe Wells Contact Station, will also reopen using revenue generated by recreation fees. The park also posted [a time-lapse video on Facebook that shows the hours it took park staff to prepare a restroom for reopening](#). Check it out. Source: Death Valley National Park.
- *Gateway NRA* – In an article on the impacts of the shutdown on New York City residents, including an NPS contractor for the park, note is made of the mounds of trash building up on Cross Bay Boulevard where it crosses Gateway NRA. "Furloughed workers are prohibited by law from setting foot in their places of employment during the shutdown," the contractor notes.

“The rule has prevented National Park Service workers from voluntarily picking up trash at Gateway...” Source: David Brand, [Brooklyn Daily Eagle](#).

- *Gettysburg NMP/Eisenhower NHS* – The park remains open because it is being operated by the Gettysburg Foundation, a nonprofit partner to the National Park Service. Licensed battlefield guides are still giving tours, but all park programs have been canceled. The Soldiers’ National Cemetery, cemetery annex, David Wills House and Eisenhower National Historic Site are all closed. Source: Tammie Gitt, [The Sentinel](#).
- *Mount Rainier NP* – The park “partially reopened” its Nisqually entrance on the weekend before last. It was able “to open itself back up” after being given permission to use retained recreation fees to fund park operations. Access remains limited, though. Visitors can enter the park and get to Longmire, but Paradise (and the road to it) remains closed. Basic guest services at Longmire and Kautz Creek – the restrooms, the National Park Inn, the restaurant, and the gift shop – are now open again. Source: Zosha Millman, [Seattle Post-Intelligencer](#), cited by KOMO News.
- *Nez Perce NHP/Big Hole NB* – The visitor centers at the Spalding site north of Lapwai and at Big Hole National Battlefield near Wisdom, Montana, have been closed, but park grounds remain open. Said the superintendent: “I’ve been communicating with a lot of our team and our staff, and I think a lot of people are just buckling down, not spending money, staying at home and trying to do little things like home improvement that don’t cost any money.” Source: Joel Mills, [Lewiston Tribune](#).
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon NPs* – The park announced last Friday that visitor centers in both parks would be open during the Martin Luther King holiday weekend. Sequoia Parks Conservancy, the parks official partner, made a donation on Friday that covered National Park Service interpretive rangers and facility maintenance expenses at all locations. The donation’s sum was not known. Source: Joshua Yeager, [Visalia Times-Delta](#).
- *Shiloh NMP* – Libertarian activists and volunteers from around Shiloh volunteered to pick up trash and brush at the park recently. Midway through their cleanup, though, they were asked by rangers to leave the property and cease their volunteer work. Said a party spokesperson: “We attempted to reason with the park ranger, however he blatantly told us that even walking along side the walkways and picking up trash was prohibited.... It is a shame in the ‘Volunteer State’ we are stopped from volunteering.” Source: Joshua Eakle, [Recuro.org](#).
- *Statue of Liberty NM/Ellis Island NM/Castle Clinton NM* – On January 15th, the NPS announced that the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Islands will continue to be open to visitors using revenue generated by recreation fees and support from its partners. Castle Clinton, where ticketing for ferries to the Statue of Liberty occurs, will also remain open. The parks have been open since the beginning of the lapse in appropriations thanks to a previous donation from the State of New York. Source: National Park Service. [National Park Service](#).

The Coalition has also weighed in on the shutdown. See the “Coalition Activities” section below for a link to the testimony given by Dick Ring, a member of the Coalition’s executive council, before the Democratic Steering & Policy Committee in the House of Representatives, and for chairman Phil Francis’ statement on the shutdown, offered on behalf of CPANP.

Yosemite National Park Two Hikers Rescued From North Dome Crevasse

Two English hikers were rescued from a crevasse on the east side of North Dome on January 16th after they became lost in the snow while hiking.

The hikers, who were wedged into the crevasse, were spotted from and rescued by the crew of a California Highway Patrol helicopter.

The hikers told first responders that they lost the trail in the snow while attempting to descend to Yosemite Valley and got trapped in the crevasse. They couldn't continue downward because of a 2,000-foot vertical drop and also couldn't go back the way they came because of steep, snow-covered ground. They then called 911 from a cellphone.

The CHP crew worked with the Yosemite search and rescue team to hoist the men out of the crevasse and get them to safety. They were taken to Ahwahnee Meadow, where park paramedics treated the two cold and wet men.

Note: The KCRA link below includes an eight-minute-long video of the rescue.

Source: Hope Miller, [KCRA News](#).

National Park System Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents

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

- *Yosemite NP* – Autopsies conducted on Vishnu Viswanath, 29, and his wife, Meenakshi Moorthy, 30, have revealed that both were intoxicated at the time of their 800-foot fall from Taft Point last October. Source: Louis Casiano, [Fox News](#).

National Park Service

National Park System

Handling Of USPP Shooting Continues To Draw Strong Condemnations – The lack of USPP and/or FBI action in the investigation into the death of Bijan Ghaisar, the unarmed driver shot to death by Park Police officers nearly 14 months ago, was the subject of a *Washington Post* editorial on January 4th and an editorial in the same paper by Ghaisar's mother on January 11th. In the former, the newspaper's editorial board offered this comment: "It's time for the FBI to wake from the deep slumber masquerading as its investigation into the death of Bijan Ghaisar...As the agency's somnolence stretches month after month, its contempt for the Ghaisar family's grief and the public's right to know becomes ever clearer. To date, the FBI has ignored calls from the Ghaisar family for an accounting of what happened. It has thumbed its nose at the congressman representing the Northern Virginia district where the shooting took place, whose request for a meeting with FBI Director Christopher A. Wray was rebuffed. Now it is dragging its feet in responding to a Dec. 17 letter from Sen. Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa), chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee until this month, who demanded information on Ghaisar's senseless, unwarranted death." The editorial concludes by saying that action is required and that questions must be answered. In the latter, Kelly Ghaisar describes the terrible pain her family has experienced, which has been greatly exacerbated by the continuing official silence. Her concluding comment: "We cannot have Bij back. But we can honor his legacy, and that we will continue to do. I hope this year brings transparency so we can have some closure and restore our faith in our justice system. I'm not optimistic, but we will not give up. Give us answers. Give us the names. Give us justice." Source: Editorial Board, [Washington Post](#); Kelly Ghaisar, [Washington Post](#).

Around The Parks

Park reports are in alphabetical order. Included are proposals in the works for new areas or changes in designation for current NPS units.

- *Colonial NHP* – The park is seeking \$54 million in federal grant money to fund repairs on the section of the Colonial Parkway that runs between Williamsburg and Yorktown. The parkway, designed and built between 1931 and 1957, is in serious need of repair, as much of it exceeded its 50-year design life a generation ago. The grant would fund replacement of concrete roadway slabs, rehabilitation of drainage systems, and stabilization of roadway embankments on the

York River. The project would extend the road's useful life by more than 40 years. Source: Jack Jacobs, [Virginia Gazette](#).

- *Hawaii Volcanoes NP* – This evening (January 23rd), PBS' NOVA series will run an episode entitled "Kilauea: Hawai'i on Fire." Check your local listings for broadcast time. Here's the abstract on the show from the NOVA webpage: "In May 2018, Kilauea volcano erupted, obliterating neighborhoods with devastating force and uprooting thousands of local residents. It is Hawai'i's most destructive volcanic eruption in generations. How can one of the most beautiful places on Earth suddenly transform into a roaring inferno, sputtering molten lava and bombs of volcanic rock the size of refrigerators? On the ground in the early days of the eruption, NOVA joins scientists and residents alike on a breathtaking journey to investigate Kilauea's recent spike in activity. Along the way, some of Hawai'i's biggest secrets are revealed: Why did these geologically distinctive volcanoes form in the middle of the Pacific? How did life establish itself on the remote islands? What does this tell us about the future of Hawai'i? And what dangers yet lurk for the inhabitants of the island paradise?" Source: [NOVA](#).
- *Intermountain Region* – The *Santa Fe New Mexican* ran an update on the renovations to the "iconic Santa Fe building," which it calls "the big, old National Park Service building on Old Santa Fe Trail." The main part of the work currently underway pertains to the removal and replacement of most of the stucco on the exterior walls of the 24,000-square-foot adobe building. The article provides additional details about the building's history and the overall project, which should be completed by next August. Source: Paul Weideman, [Santa Fe New Mexican](#).
- *Zion NP* – The family that owns land along the northeastern boundary of the park has agreed to let hikers continue to pass through their section of the narrowest stretch of Zion Canyon. Visitors with permits will still be able to hike the popular 16-mile Narrows Trail, starting from a trailhead that passes through property owned by the Bullocks and into the park. The Bullocks still hope to reach a permanent deal with the federal government; until then, the extension of the temporary agreement will ensure permit-holding hikers can enter the canyon through March. Source: [KNPR News](#).

Congressional Actions

Reports on legislation, upcoming hearings and new public laws of relevance to the national parks, prepared by Don Hellmann, former assistant director, legislative and Congressional affairs for the National Park Service.

New Public Laws

Nothing to report.

Senate Actions

January 14 – The Committee on Appropriations announced the assignments for the 116th Congress for the Subcommittee on the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies – Senators Murkowski (Chair), Alexander, Blunt, McConnell, Capito, Hyde-Smith, Daines, Rubio, Udall, Feinstein, Leahy, Reed, Tester, Merkley, and Van Hollen. Senators Shelby and Leahy are ex officio members of each subcommittee.

January 16 – The following nominations were submitted to the Senate:

- Susan Combs, of Texas, to be assistant Secretary of the Interior for policy, management, and budget.
- Aimee Kathryn Jorjani, of Wisconsin, to be chairman of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation for a term expiring January 19, 2021.

- R. Clarke Cooper, of Florida, to be an assistant Secretary of State for political and military affairs. Clarke was the assistant director of legislative and Congressional affairs for the National Park Service during the first term of the administration of President George W. Bush.

January 15 – The Committee on Environment and Public Works held a hearing to examine the nomination of Andrew Wheeler, of Virginia, to be administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

January 17 – The Senate agreed to S. Res. 21, to constitute the minority party's membership on the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for the 116th Congress (or until their successors are chosen) as follows – Senators Manchin, Wyden, Cantwell, Sanders, Stabenow, Heinrich, Hirono, King, Masto. This resolution supersedes the minority party's membership approved in S. Res. 13 on January 9th, which showed Ms. Cantwell as senior to Sen. Wyden on the committee.

January 17 – The nomination of Mark Lee Greenblatt, of Maryland, to be inspector general for the Department of the Interior was submitted to the Senate.

House Actions

January 15 – The House agreed to H. Res. 42, electing members to certain standing committees of the House, including the Committee on Appropriations, as follows – Representatives Kaptur, Visclosky, Serrano, DeLauro, Price of North Carolina, Roybal-Allard, Bishop of Georgia, Lee of California, McCollum, Ryan, Ruppertsberger, Wasserman Schultz, Cuellar, Pingree, Quigley, Kilmer, Cartwright, Meng, Pocan, Clark of Massachusetts, Aguilar, Frankel, Bustos, Watson Coleman, Lawrence, Torres of California, Crist, Kirkpatrick, and Case.

January 15 – The House passed:

- H.R. 135, to amend the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 to strengthen Federal antidiscrimination laws enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and expand accountability within the Federal Government. The bill passed by a vote of 424 yeas with none voting nay.
- H.R. 136, to protect unpaid interns in the Federal Government from workplace harassment and discrimination.
- H. Res. 41, rejecting White nationalism and White supremacy. The resolution passed by a vote of 424 yeas to 1 nay. The resolution was in response to comments made by Rep. Steve King (R-IA) that many considered racist. The one nay vote against the resolution was by Rep. Bobby Rush (D-IL), who explained his vote in a press release issued on January 15: “While I strongly condemn white supremacy and white nationalism, my position remains unchanged. Anything short of censure is shallow. Steve King has made a career of making racist statements. That is the only thing he is known for and this pattern of rabid racism must be confronted head on by the House of Representatives. This resolution just restates the obvious...”.

January 15 – The House failed to pass H.J. Res. 27, making further continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2019. The joint resolution would have made continuing appropriations for the remaining federal agencies that are affected by the federal government shutdown, including the Department of the Interior, through February 1, 2019, or whenever their individual appropriations bills are enacted. However, the resolution was debated under suspension of the rules, which requires it to be passed by a two-thirds margin – it failed by a vote of 237 yeas to 187 nays.

January 16 – The House passed H.R. 268, making supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, to several federal departments and agencies for expenses related to the consequences of recent wildfires, hurricanes, volcanos, earthquakes, typhoons, and other natural disasters. The bill passed by a vote of 237 yeas to 187 nays. Among other provisions, the bill provides the following to the National Park Service:

- \$50 million for the Historic Preservation Fund for expenses related to the consequences of Hurricanes Florence and Michael, and Typhoon Yutu.
- \$78,000,000, for Construction for expenses related to the consequences of Hurricanes Florence and Michael, Typhoons Yutu and Mangkhut, and calendar year 2018 wildfires, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions.

January 17 – The House passed:

- H.R. 150, to modernize Federal grant reporting. The bill passed by a vote of 422 yeas with none voting nay.
- H.J. Res. 28, making further continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2019. The joint resolution makes continuing appropriations for the remaining federal agencies that are affected by the federal government shutdown, including the Department of the Interior, through February 28, 2019, or whenever their individual appropriations bills are enacted. The bill passed by a voice vote. However, due to a dispute between the Democrats and the Republicans about whether to pass the resolution by a voice vote versus a recorded vote, the House vacated the initial vote that allowed the bill to pass and agreed to hold a recorded vote on the resolution on January 23.

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

Impacts Of El Niño and La Niña To Intensify – The most recent edition of *Weatherwise* has an article on a study by National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) scientists that shows that effects from [El Niño](#) and [La Niña](#) will intensify as the climate continues to warm. These effects will be in the form of amplified temperatures, precipitation and wildfire risks, varying according to whether it's the former, with increased ocean temperatures, or the latter, when ocean temperatures decrease. Example: El Niño events will lead to cooler and wetter conditions and increased risk of floods in the Southwest, while La Niña events will increase wildfire danger. The head of the NCAR study is quoted: "The cycling between El Niño and La Niña is responsible for some of the weather whiplash we get from year to year, particularly in the western U.S. What we find when we look at model simulations of the future is that the whiplash is likely to get more severe." Source: *Weatherwise* (no link available).

Permafrost Continues To Warm Worldwide – "Vast areas of permafrost around the world warmed significantly over the past decade, intensifying concerns about accelerated releases of heat-trapping methane and carbon dioxide as microbes decompose the thawing organic soils," reports *InsideClimate News*. This trend is documented [in a study published in the journal *Nature Communications*](#). Detailed data from a global network of permafrost test sites show that, on average, permafrost regions around the world—in the Arctic, Antarctic and the high mountains—warmed by a half degree Fahrenheit between 2007 and 2016." This is not good, to say the least. "Most permafrost areas have been frozen since the last ice age, about 10,000 years ago. They trap vast amounts of carbon in layers of frozen organic soil up to a mile thick. By some estimates, the Arctic permafrost contains enough carbon to nearly double the amount of CO₂ currently in the Earth's atmosphere. A rapid meltdown would be disastrous because it could release a lot of CO₂—in addition to methane, a powerful short-lived climate pollutant—to the atmosphere, where it would cause additional warming..." Source: Bob Berwyn, [InsideClimate News](#).

Ocean Warming Is Accelerating Faster Than Thought – Paralleling the above bad news is this report from the *New York Times*: "Scientists say the world's oceans are warming far more quickly than previously thought, a finding with dire implications for climate change because almost all the excess heat absorbed by the planet ends up stored in their waters. [A new analysis, published...in the journal *Science*](#), found that the oceans are heating up 40 percent faster on average than a United Nations

panel estimated five years ago. The researchers also concluded that ocean temperatures have broken records for several straight years.” Source: Kendra Pierre-Louis, [New York Times](#).

Pace Of Antarctica Melting Increases – Completing this climate crisis catastrophe trifecta is a [report published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#) that shows that the rate of ice loss in Antarctica has increased each decade over the last 40 years -- from a 40 billion tons per year in the decade from 1979 to 1990 to 252 billion tons per year in the decade from 2009 to 2017. Moreover, the rate of melting has been accelerating in the most recent decades, up 280% in the second half of the nearly 40 years compared to the first half. Source: Monica Medina and Miro Korenha, [Our Daily Planet](#).

National Park System Issues

Native Flora and Fauna – Recent news pertaining to the protection, propagation and advancement of species now or formerly native to the national parks:

- *Florida Coastal Parks* – Florida’s [red tide](#) epidemic, an algal bloom harmful to wildlife, is now in its 16th month. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission reports that it has so far caused killed 589 sea turtles and 213 manatee (plus those not reported). As of December 20th, it had also killed 127 bottlenose dolphins, leading the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to declare an [unusual mortality event \(UME\)](#). Source: Carol R. Munoz, [Miami Herald-Tribune](#).
- *Alaskan Parks* – On January 15th, *PLOS Biology*, a publication that features “works of exceptional significance, originality, and relevance in all areas of biological science,” posted a paper entitled “[Large Carnivores Under Assault In Alaska](#).” Here’s the abstract: “In Alaska, gray wolves (*Canis lupis*), brown bears (*Ursus arctos*), and black bears (*U. americanus*) are managed in most of the state in ways intended to significantly reduce their abundance in the expectation of increasing hunter harvests of ungulates. To our knowledge, Alaska is unique in the world because this management priority is both widespread and mandated by state law. Large carnivore management in Alaska is a reversion to outdated management concepts and occurs without effective monitoring programs designed to scientifically evaluate impacts on predator populations. Large carnivore management in Alaska should be based on rigorous science including the status and trends of carnivore populations.” See the full text of the paper for details. Source: [PLOS Biology](#).
- *Western Parks* – Coalition member Sarah Bransom has sent along an update on efforts to protect the [greater sage grouse](#) (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), an issue that CPANP has weighed in on in the past. In September, the Western Watersheds Project and the Center for Biological Diversity succeeded in their efforts to obtain a court decision regarding public comment periods for BLM oil and gas leasing proposals involving greater sage grouse habitat. Among other things, the plaintiffs asked a federal court in Idaho to rule on BLM’s 2018 instruction memorandum (IM-2018-034), which severely limited the opportunity for public comments and asked the court to instruct BLM to reinstate its 2010 policy allowing for a minimum of 30 days of public comments on proposed lease decisions, including decisions on environmental assessments and FONSI, as required by NEPA (see Western Watersheds Project and Center for Biological Diversity v. Zinke, et al. 2018 1:18-cv-00187 at [this link](#)). The court agreed with the plaintiffs and ruled that BLM violated NEPA and FLPMA and issued a preliminary injunction requiring BLM to revert to the 2010 guidance starting in the fourth quarter of 2018 in instances where oil and gas leasing is proposed in sage grouse habitat. Since this is a preliminary injunction only, there will be more court proceedings on this issue before it is finally resolved, but in the meantime, the more generous public comment period established in 2010 stands. Source: Sarah Bransom.

External Pressures – Management issues related to usage or development in culturally or naturally sensitive areas abutting parks or extending into parks:

- *Appalachian Trail/Blue Ridge Parkway* – On December 12th, the *Richmond Times Dispatch* reported that a three-judge panel from the Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals had blocked a critical crossing of the Appalachian Trail through the Blue Ridge Mountains near Wintergreen Resort. Dominion Energy, lead developer of the \$7 billion project, vowed to immediately appeal the panel's ruling to the full Fourth Circuit, while opponents asked federal regulators to revoke the certificate they issued 14 months ago to build the 604-mile natural gas pipeline through three states. Here are additional details: “The Southern Environmental Law Center, based in Charlottesville, asked the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to revoke the project's certificate of public convenience and necessity. The move came after the Fourth Circuit vacated a permit that the U.S. Forest Service issued to allow construction of the pipeline beneath the Appalachian National Scenic Trail between Augusta and Nelson counties. Without the permit, Dominion Energy and its partners would have to seek the explicit congressional approval they tried to avoid by rerouting the pipeline in 2015 to cross the trail and the adjacent Blue Ridge Parkway on land controlled by the Forest Service in the George Washington National Forest. Originally, it would have crossed the national trail and scenic parkway about eight miles north near Afton.” See the article for more information. Source: Michael Martz, [Richmond Times Dispatch](#).

Coalition Activities

Coalition Issues Statement On the Continuing Partial Government Shutdown – Phil Francis, the Coalition's chair, has issued a statement on the shutdown. The text follows:

“This partial government shutdown needs to end. As our elected leaders fail to do their jobs and fully fund the government, there's discussion that more NPS employees may be asked to work without pay to keep the lights on. Employees will process utility bills, ensuring that corporations continue to get their money, while those employees are unable to pay their own bills.

“The Coalition is calling on acting Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt to close national parks until the shutdown is over to prevent any further damage to these critical national treasures. Without park rangers to safeguard the lives of visitors and our natural and cultural resources, the parks and the people who visit them are in danger. There are already reports of damage to our irreplaceable resources at parks that were directed to remain partially open. Piles of trash and human waste are building up. The Secretary of the Interior is charged by Congress with preserving the resources of our national parks unimpaired for future generations. Clearly acting secretary Bernhardt is violating this law due to the damage being inflicted upon our parks on a daily basis.

“President Trump took responsibility for creating this mess and it will be National Park Service employees cleaning it up when they get back to work.

“This shutdown needs to end now, or the parks should be closed before this administration inflicts further harm on our national parks, our federal workforce and their families, as well as the communities where they live. Clearly, the lights are on but there's nobody home.”

CPANP Membership Climbs – As of Friday, January 18th, the Coalition had 1,676 members. Amy Gilbert reports that quite a number have come in lately, no doubt in reaction to the affects the current fiasco are having on the national parks.

Upcoming Webinar On Legislative Advocacy – The Coalition held the first of two webinars on legislative advocacy and the Coalition's advocacy toolkit on January 17th, with 30 people attending. The second webinar will be held today. More information and registration information can be found at <https://protectnps.org/free-webinar-opportunity/> .

Coalition Actions – Here are some of the actions that the Coalition took on your behalf over the past week or so:

- *Congressional Testimony* – Dick Ring, a member of the Coalition’s executive council, testified on behalf of CPANP before the Democratic Steering & Policy Committee in the House of Representatives on January 15th. The text of his statement can be found [at this link](#).
- *Letter to Editor* – Mark Butler, also a member of the executive council, wrote a letter to the Washington Post that appeared on its opinion/letters page on January 15th. He argued forcefully for a total shutdown of the parks during the larger shutdown: “Allowing national parks to limp along unfunded and unmanaged is a basic failure to uphold the core American value of preserving and protecting these iconic landscapes.” His letter can be read [at this link](#) (it’s the second of two letters).
- *TV Interview* – Phil Francis, chairman of the Coalition, explained to WBIR-TV on the reasons why the park should be closed until shutdown ends. The two-minute-long video can be seen at [this link](#).

Park People, Park Friends

NPS Alumni

Tribute To The Late Erny Kuncel

On Wednesday, January 16th, retired ranger Ernest “Erny” Kuncel, 77, died of natural causes at an assisted living center in Estes Park, Colorado. For 35 years, he proudly wore the green and grey of the National Park Service, retiring as a ranger-investigator in January, 1998.

Member Butch Farabee has sent along this tribute:

Born and raised in the suburbs of Chicago, Erny began his NPS career as a seasonal climbing ranger at Rocky Mountain NP in 1963, spending three seasons there learning to climb while also attending the University of Colorado in Boulder. That was followed by one season each at Devils Tower NM and Carlsbad Caverns NP. He got on permanently as a protection ranger at Coronado NM.

Erny then spent 18 years at the Grand Canyon, beginning as a general patrol ranger and quickly earning a reputation among the concession employees as a “Secret (Undercover) Squirrel.” The “Canyon” was his favorite place and it was here that he genuinely made his mark, as a ranger-paramedic, probably his true calling. He finished his NPS career as an investigator, working at the Rocky Mountain Regional Office in Denver.

The NPS does not lack for unique and colorful people. Erny was both, and, in some circles, was near legendary. While the word “colorful” can mean accomplished, interesting, creative, inquisitive, and enthusiastic; it can also mean irritating, difficult, egotistical, and even insufferable. Erny was all of the above, and some even considered him a royal pain-in-the-...! Sometimes these traits were exhibited all in the same day.

But whatever your take about Erny, he left little doubt among friend and foe alike that he was passionate about the NPS mission, sincerely believing in the heritage and culture of the “flat hat.”

Throughout his career, there were few that I would more trust my life to in an emergency, than Erny. He was a brilliant paramedic. A great many people literally owe their lives to him, including the park’s deputy superintendent. I once watched Erny save a visitor’s life in the tiny Grand Canyon Hospital after the local doctor had given up and while a priest was quietly administering the last rites to the patient.

Reflecting on such occasions, Erny could (and often would) let you know just how good he was – sometimes subtly and sometimes in your face. But mostly ...justifiably. When he retired, the *Denver Post* carried a full-page summary of his NPS life in its Sunday supplement of January 22, 1998.

I have written this not knowing if anyone else would, but I did not think he should go unrecognized. So, with all of his admirable qualities, and despite his all-too-many warts, he was still one of us ...and should be remembered.

Scott, Erny's only child, recently pre-deceased him. Scott was also the son of Judy Kuncl, a retired park ranger herself. Within the past year, Erny and his wife Nancy ended a nearly three-decades-long marriage.

Source: Butch Farabee.

NPS Alumni **Passing Of Retired Ranger Lou Hendrickx**

Louis Hendrickx Jr., 86, of Raymore, Missouri, passed away on November 29th.

Louis was born on December 29, 1931 in Butler, Minnesota, the ninth of eleven children born to Louis Hendrickx and Juliana Dousi.

Louis served in the United States Air Force from April 1951 to December 1953, ending up as a sergeant. He then went to the University of Montana, where he earned a degree in forestry in 1960. Louis then went to park ranger training at Albright in 1963, and went on to work at Glacier, Death Valley and Natural Bridges before retiring in 1987.

Lou loved sports, traveling (Europe, Russia, South America and Central America), and talking about his career as a park ranger. He loved fall and all the color of trees, old barns, and open spaces and fields. He had the full collection of Zane Grey books – his favorite book was *The Light of the Western Stars*. Lou also collected western memorabilia, coins, Dutch shipwrecked items, and pre-Columbian pottery.

Louis is survived by three and well as over fifty nieces and nephews. Services will be held at a later date. Arrangements are being made by the Cullen Funeral Home, Raymore, Missouri (816-322-5278).

Source: Hendrickx Family, courtesy of member Dave Panebaker.

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.

- *Santa Monica Mountains NRA* – The park, which lies just south of the epicenter of Monday's major earthquake in the Northridge area, suffered only light to moderate damage. All employees have been accounted for and are okay. Moderate damage was inflicted on park headquarters, and the chimney of the maintenance headquarters/ranger station at the Diamond X collapsed. At the time of the report, patrols were out checking other facilities for damage. Several park employees have been forced to evacuate their homes and apartments due to severe structural damage. The park is helping them move their personal belongings to temporary storage facilities. Although telephone service has been restored, it is still difficult to call out of the area. Aftershocks are continuing to shake the entire area; more than 100 over magnitude 3.0 have occurred since Monday's quake. Submitted by Chief Ranger Ernie Quintana.
- *San Juan NHP* – Oil from the barge *M.J. Berman*, which grounded on January 7th, continues to spill into the ocean and coat the north coast of Puerto Rico two weeks later. Heavy seas and swells over ten feet high have torn the bottom out of the barge, spilling an additional 200,000 gallons of #6 bunker oil. Substantial amounts of oil have come ashore along the park's two plus miles of coast, and two significant cultural sites have been affected. Federal survey crews

are monitoring the spill, assessing damage, and determining an appropriate course of action. The Coast Guard is in the process of determining whether it should tow the barge out to sea or continue pumping it out in place. Submitted by Chief Ranger J. Schafner.

- *Grand Teton NP* – On December 30th, a man who'd been arrested for breaking into cars in the park pled guilty to three felony counts of theft (18 USC 661) in federal district court in Wyoming. He'd been charged with committing a series of auto burglaries in Yellowstone and Grand Teton last September. As part of his sentence, he is required to give full disclosure regarding these thefts and his activities elsewhere in the district of Wyoming, and will also be required to cooperate with other jurisdictions for the purpose of closing other cases. His MO was to break out vehicle windows with a blunt instrument, remove packs and high value items, then flee the area by vehicle. The man, who is a suspect in numerous residential burglaries in Grand Canyon, at least one burglary in Yosemite, and another in Sequoia NF, will be sentenced some time during the next three to four weeks. Submitted by Law Enforcement Specialist Colin Campbell.

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- Production: Steve Pittleman
- Regular Correspondents: Don Hellmann, Dennis Burnett, Rick Smith, and Duncan Morrow
- Issue Contributors: Bob Martin, Sarah Bransom, Dave Panebaker, Mike Murray, Don Hellmann, Bill Wade, Cathy Halainen, Mark Forbes, Sandy Rabinowitch

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

"I do [my work as an archeologist] because I love it. I am extremely... passionate about protecting and preserving cultural resources for generations to come. Not being able to do this and knowing that archaeological resources are being impacted by the shutdown is really tough. It's hard to have hope for the future of this country when you see how selfish and animalistic people turn when they have no one to enforce rules that benefit all."

Anonymous US Forest Service archeologist, cited in the [*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*](#).

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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."

To receive a copy of this free publication, join or support the coalition. Any current, retired or former salaried employee (GS, wage grade, seasonal, temporary, or SES) of the National Park Service can join the Coalition ([click on this link](#)). Coalition supporters can also join and receive the newsletter ([click on this link](#)). If you need to contact the Coalition office on other matters, including changes of address, [click on this link](#).

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