



The Coalition Weekly Report Wednesday, October 30, 2019

Volume 3

Number 36

Incidents

Sequoia NP

Lost Woman Found After Spelling SOS With Tree Bark

The search for 56-year-old Mary Gomez, missing in the park since last Friday, came to a happy end on Monday when the crew of a California Air National Guard aircraft spotted tree bark that spelled out S-O-S on the ground. Responding rangers found Gomez in good health, though she was cold, hungry and thirsty.

Gomez, a traveling nurse from Mississippi, was working in San Francisco and had left on Wednesday to visit the park. She was supposed to return to San Francisco that night, but never showed up, prompting the search.

When located, Gomez was about three-and-a-half miles from the spot where her car was found.

Gomez issued this statement: "I am profoundly thankful to the National Park Service, who worked tirelessly to rescue me and were so very kind when they did. I am hungry, a little dehydrated, and I have cuts and bruises, but I'm very fortunate to be in as good a condition as I am. My priority now is spending time with my family. Thank you for your support and coverage and for the time and space as I recover."

Source: [KFSN News](#).

Yellowstone NP

Man Who Threatened To Kill Up To 20 People Arrested In Park

A North Dakota man arrested in the park on September 18th threatened to shoot as many as 20 people at an office in Idaho if his wife didn't identify a man there he suspected of having an "emotional affair" with her.

Rangers arrested Joshua Mjones, 44, of Christine, North Dakota, at a picnic area. He was found to have a 9 mm handgun and 50 rounds of ammunition in his SUV. Evidence suggests that Mjones, a former school board member, was on his way to Boise, Idaho.

Sheriff's officials in eastern North Dakota used Mjones' cellphone records to track him to the Yellowstone area. Earlier that day, Mjones texted and called his wife and her brother, saying if she sent a photo of the man he sought, "only two people would die rather than 20." Mjones allegedly sent her a picture of the pistol with the message, "Up to you." Court records did not identify the man Mjones sought or where in Boise he worked.

Mjones was jailed on federal charges of illegal gun possession and making threats.

Source: Mead Gruver, Associated Press via [Idaho Statesman](#).

Colorado NM Driver Killed When Car Plunges 450 Feet Off Rim Rock Drive

A man was killed on the morning of October 15th when his car went over the edge of Rim Rock Drive near the overlook at Cold Shivers Point and plunged 450 feet to the ground below. It took about five hours for an interagency SAR team to extract his body from the vehicle.

Rim Rock Drive is a 23-mile-long scenic route that runs through the park between the mountain towns of Grand Junction and Fruita. The road is challenging, full of sheer drop-offs, steep hills, and tight curves.

The cause of the crash is being investigated. Several law enforcement and rescue agencies assisted the NPS in recovery efforts, including the Mesa County Sheriff's Office, Mesa County Search and Rescue technical ropes and communication teams, Colorado State Patrol, Grand Junction Fire Department, and Glade Park Volunteer Fire Department.

Source: Breanna Sneeringer, [OutThereColorado.com](#).

Wright Brothers NM Stolen Orville Wright Bust Recovered; Investigation Continues

A reproduction bust of Orville Wright that had recently been stolen from the park was found on the afternoon of October 11th on the beach in Kill Devil Hills.

A beach visitor called the Dare County non-emergency line to report that the bust was "tucked" into the dunes. A Kill Devil Hills officer and rangers were soon on scene and confirmed that it was the bust of Wright that had been taken.

Rangers will be investigating the theft of the bust and the damage to its granite mounting base.

Source: [13NewsNow.com](#).

Yellowstone NP Man Busted With Methedrine Stash After Visiting Yogi Bear

A California man was sentenced to more than 15 years in prison after police found eight pounds of methamphetamine hidden in a spare tire after he told them he had seen Yogi Bear in Yellowstone National Park

Manuel Sanchez, 32, was sentenced last Thursday to 15 years and 8 months in federal prison after he pleaded guilty to possession with intent to distribute methedrine.

Sanchez was stopped in a rental car by Montana Highway Patrol on December 12, 2017 for trailing a car too closely. During the stop, he told police he was driving to North Dakota from Idaho, where he had been visiting with family, and planned to fly back to California once there.

During the interview, Sanchez was unable to name the city he had visited, but remembered that he had just come from Yellowstone National Park, where he claimed that he'd seen Yogi Bear.

Suspicious of the man's story, the officer asked permission to search the vehicle and Sanchez consented. In it, police found a spare tire that appeared to be deflated, something unusual for a rental car. The tire was taken to a nearby repair shop, where it was discovered that it contained six vacuum-sealed packages containing just over eight pounds of meth - the equivalent of 30,000 doses.

Source: Paulina Dedaj, [Fox News](#).

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center Major Fires Continue In California

NIFC remains at National Preparedness Level 2. The Northern California and Southern California areas, however, are each at Preparedness Level 3.

Four new large fires were reported on Monday. Nationally, 16 large fires have burned more than 120,000 acres in five states. Large fires in California continue to require evacuations for nearby residents.

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

- *Grand Canyon NP* – There’s been no change in the lightning-caused Ikes Fire since last week’s report.

Resource Commitment Trend

Category	September 24th	October 22nd	October 29th
Area Command Teams	0	0	0
NIMO Teams	1	0	0
Type 1 Teams	0	1	1
Type 2 Teams	3	1	0
Crews	68	49	117
Engines	161	125	886
Helicopters	23	13	46
Total FF/Overhead	3,001	2,069	7,346

Fires/Acreage

Category	2019 Total	2009-2018 Ave	2019 Variance
United States: YTD Fires	44,537	54,182	- 18%
United States: YTD Acres	4,558,859	6,466,224	- 30%

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

Nothing to report.

Senate Actions

October 21 – The Senate passed [H.R. 150](#), to modernize Federal grant reporting, after agreeing to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute.

October 22 – The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held a hearing to examine international efforts to increase energy efficiency and opportunities to advance energy efficiency in the United States. Testimony was heard from public witnesses. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

October 24 – The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations concluded a joint hearing with the Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management to examine E-Rulemaking comment systems, after receiving testimony from Elizabeth Angerman, Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Office of Government-Wide Policy, General Services Administration; Dominic Mancini, Deputy Administrator, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, on behalf of the eRulemaking Executive Steering Committee; Ashley Boizelle, Deputy General Counsel, Federal Communications Commission; and Seto J. Bagdoyan, Director of Audits, Forensic Audits and Investigative Service, Government Accountability Office.

House Actions

October 22 – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands held a hearing entitled [“No More Standoffs: Protecting Federal Employees and Ending the Culture of Anti-Government Attacks and Abuse.”](#) Testimony was heard from Anne-Marie Fennell, Director, Natural Resources and Environment Team, Government Accountability Office; and public witnesses.

October 22 – The Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs held a hearing on several bills, including [H.R. 1424](#), to amend Title 38, United States Code, to ensure the Secretary of Veterans Affairs permits fallen soldier displays in national cemeteries. Testimony was heard from Ronald Burke, Executive Director, Pension and Fiduciary Service, Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs; Kimberly McLeod, Deputy Vice Chairman, Board of Veterans' Appeals, Department of Veterans Affairs; and public witnesses.

October 22 – The Select Committee on the Climate Crisis held a hearing entitled [“Solving the Climate Crisis: Natural Solutions to Cutting Pollution and Building Resilience”](#). Testimony was heard from public witnesses. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

October 23 – The Committee On Oversight and Reform Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties held a hearing entitled [“Examining the Oil Industry's Efforts to Suppress the Truth about Climate Change”](#). Testimony was heard from public witnesses. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

October 23 – The Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment held a hearing entitled [“The Pebble Mine Project: Process and Potential Impacts”](#). Testimony was heard from public witnesses. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

National Park Service

National Park System

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

- *NPS Withdraws First Amendment/ SUP Fee Proposal* – In response to more than 140,000 comments received from the public and stakeholders, the Service is withdrawing its August

2018 proposal to revise the First Amendment and special use permit regulations for the National Mall, President's Park and other national parks in the Washington, D.C. area. The regulations could have, among other things, made protesters repay the federal government for the cost of security at demonstrations. Opponents – including the ACLU, NAACP and others – said that the measure would have saddled protest organizers with enormous costs, crippling their ability to protest and exercise their rights under the Constitution. Source: Michael E. Ruane and Marissa J. Lang, [Washington Post](#).

- *Proposal For ATV Access To Utah Parks Withdrawn* – On September 24th, acting-Intermountain Regional Director Chip Jenkins issued a directive to the superintendents of Arches, Bryce Canyon, Canyonlands, Capitol Reef, and Zion national parks that, effective November 1st, they were to open their dirt and paved roads to ATV vehicles that were registered and licensed for road travel in the state. It also applied to Dinosaur, Hovenweep, Natural Bridges, and Cedar Breaks national monuments. This new policy had been under discussion and development since 2008, when the Utah legislature passed a law that allowed licensed and registered ATVs access to all state and county roads. While 36 CFR 4.2 directs federal agencies to bow to state vehicle laws, 36 CFR 1.5 requires that an action of such consequence requires a rulemaking via the *Federal Register*. Opposition to the action was broad and pronounced. On October 25th, the directive was withdrawn. Source: Kurt Repanshek, [National Parks Traveler](#).
- *Secretary Directs Parks To Seek Public Opinion On E-Bikes* – In late August, Secretary Bernhardt issued an order directing NPS areas to accommodate e-bike users; the policy change came without public disclosure and without an opportunity for the public to comment on the proposal before its implementation. The reaction was predictable – dozens of conservation groups, who fear that permitting the motorized bikes on those trails will create a slippery slope that will lead to future problems with managing those trails, protested the action. On October 22nd, Bernhardt directed the Park Service to "begin the longer term process of obtaining public input on new regulations that will clarify that low-speed e-bikes should enjoy the same access as conventional bicycles, consistent with other federal and state laws." Stay tuned for developments. Source: Kurt Repanshek, [National Parks Traveler](#).
- *Mike Reynolds Bumped From Superintendent's Position At Yosemite* – "In a move that is raising questions about the future of Yosemite National Park, the National Park Service announced Wednesday that it was reassigning park Supt. Mike Reynolds, a 34-year park service veteran who grew up in Yosemite," reported the *Los Angeles Times* on October 23rd. "Reynolds will become regional director of the agency's Lower Colorado Basin, Upper Colorado Basin and Arkansas-Rio Grande-Texas-Gulf regions. He is expected to begin his new assignment by the end of the year, park service officials said. Reynolds' departure comes amid controversial proposals for increasing recreation and tourism in the park, reportedly put forward by Interior Secretary David Bernhardt. They include a proposal that would for the first time allow boats on the park's Hetch Hetchy Reservoir." See one of the two entries for Yosemite below for additional details. Cicely Muldoon, superintendent of Point Reyes National Seashore since 2010, will serve as acting superintendent at Yosemite after Reynolds departs and until a permanent superintendent is named. Source: Louis Sahagun, [Los Angeles Times](#).
- *NPCA Issues List Of "Spoiled" Parks* – On October 11th, NPCA issued a list of the dozen national parks "most threatened by the Trump Administration's aggressive energy policies on public lands." The report, says NPCA, "explores how current leasing policies have scarred landscapes and threaten future harm to clean air, cultural heritage, wildlife and thriving tourism economies." These are the twelve parks – Sequoia, Mesa Verde, Rocky Mountain, Great Sand Dunes, Dinosaur, Big Cypress, Carlsbad Caverns, Chaco Culture, Theodore Roosevelt, Hovenweep, Canyonlands and Grand Teton. You can read the report, including proposed solutions, at the following link. Source: [National Parks and Conservation Association](#).

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.

- *Acadia NP* – The park has erected a monument to honor Karl Jacobson, a ranger who was 22 years old when he was killed in 1938 by a poacher who allegedly mistook him for a deer. The memorial consists of a large, rounded piece of granite with a plaque and a bronze ranger’s hat bolted to the top, as if a ranger had just put it down momentarily. It is not located where Jacobson was shot — known only to be somewhere along the park’s Schoodic boundary at the time — but has instead been emplaced outside the ranger office at the Schoodic Woods Campground near Winter Harbor, where the public can see it. The article has pictures of the new monument and of Jacobson. Source: Bill Trotter, [Bangor Daily News](#).
- *Allegheny Portage Railroad NHS* – On October 11th, the park hosted a grand reopening celebration at the Summit Level Visitor Center, marking the end of a more than three-year renovation project to update the building and its exhibits. The center’s new layout combines previous artifacts with new exhibits, such as *Summit Queen*, a life-size canal boat that extends out from a wall inside the visitors center to show what traveling accommodations were like on the boat. Other exhibits feature what travelers wore during that time, what kinds of goods were shipped on the railroad, and how the railroad’s various inclined planes — five going up and five going down — operated on the mountain. Another new section of the visitor center talks about the Underground Railroad. Source: Beth Ann Miller, [Daily American](#).
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* – A six-mile stretch of the Blue Ridge Parkway in Roanoke County (milepost 106 to 112) will be closed indefinitely until roadway damage can be repaired. The Federal Highway Administration deemed the section unsafe, saying dips in the roadway would cause cars to bottom out and be dangerous for motorcyclists. This closure highlights the park’s struggle to keep on top of maintenance and repairs – the parkway currently has more than \$508 million worth of deferred maintenance. Source: Kate Capodanno, [WDBJ](#).
- *Cape Cod NS* – An extensive rehabilitation of Highland Light in Truro will begin later this fall. Highland Light is one of the park’s most iconic historic structures; over 30,000 people climbed the light and visited the Keeper’s Shop and exhibits in 2018. This will be the first major rehabilitation project at the lighthouse since the United States Coast Guard conveyed it to the National Park Service in 1998. The condition of the lighthouse has deteriorated quickly due to excessive moisture caused by changes to the tower’s ventilation system when it was moved away from the eroding bluff in 1996. Source: [CapeCod.com](#).
- *Cuyahoga Valley NP* – The park and the Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park opened the park’s first central visitors’ center in a ceremony held last weekend. The Cuyahoga River flows behind the new Boston Mill Visitor Center and the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad runs in front of it. The Ohio & Erie Canal and Towpath Trail is nearby. The Conservancy raised more than \$7 million for the project, which included renovating the main building, which was originally built around 1905. “Cuyahoga Valley has existed as part of the national park system for 45 years, and this is the first time we’ve been able to welcome guests at a centralized visitor center,” said Craig Kenkel, the park’s superintendent. “[It’s] a true ‘front door’ for our park, like those found at national parks around the country.” Source: Robin Goist, [Cleveland Plain Dealer](#).
- *Delaware Water Gap NRA* – The park has released a draft visitor use management plan for Delaware Water Gap NRA and Middle Delaware National S&RR for public review and comment. Proposed changes include transitioning from the current practice of charging an amenity fee at six discrete areas to charging an entrance fee for all park users (the majority of the funds would remain in the park); adding up to 20 new river campsites, improving others and implementing a reservation and fee system for river campsites; explore the possibility of developing a new river access on the New Jersey side of the park; develop picnic sites that can accommodate large groups and implement a permit/reservation system to regulate their use levels; improve the trail system by linking trail networks and enhancing accessibility; and

modernize delivery and strategically locate education and interpretation services, including a mobile visitor center and increased partnerships. Comments are being accepted until December 6th [at the park's PEPC webpage](#). Source: [Hopatcong Lake Regional News](#).

- *Everglades NP* – A state permit has been issued to remove a 5.45-mile section of roadbed along the Tamiami Trail that is considered an impediment to the natural flow of water through the Everglades. Removal of the roadbed is expected to begin next spring and be completed in 2021. Source: [WPTV](#).
- *Golden Gate NRA* – There's a new development in the decades long sparring between the park and dog owners who want their pets to run off leash. The park is announcing dog-access rules that will take effect on October 28th via the superintendent's compendium. The regulations restrict dog walking in park lands across San Francisco, San Mateo and Marin counties, and expand park officials' discretionary authority to cite and fine dog owners and impound their pets. In San Francisco, the changes include requirements to leash dogs on stairwells at Ocean Beach and in several parking, wildlife and plant protection areas in Fort Funston. Even stricter restrictions apply in San Mateo and Marin counties, where dogs will be banned from several park trails if the compendium is implemented. Dog owners, of course, plan to sue. For details on the history of this long-running skirmish, see the article at the link that follows. Source: Caroline Ghisolfi, [San Francisco Examiner](#).
- *Mesa Verde NP* – The ancestral remains of Native American tribes that once called the park's cliffs home – the remains of about 20 people and 28 funerary objects – will be repatriated as part of an agreement between Finland and the United States. The remains and artifacts were unearthed during excavations by a Swedish researcher in 1891 and hundreds of items eventually became part of the collection of the National Museum of Finland. The vice chairman of the Hopi Tribe said that they hope to receive the collection by early next year and will ensure funerary items are buried with the remains in the general area where they were taken, accompanied by a ceremony. Source: [Associated Press via CBS Denver](#).
- *Organ Pipe Cactus NM* – An article in *Sierra*, the national magazine of the Sierra Club, documents the extensive and serious impacts of the new border wall with Mexico on the park and nearby Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge – particularly the numerous new roads and their impact on water flow: “[Road construction] has had a devastating impact on the region's ecology. Entire groves of mesquite trees and vegetation surrounding the playas have withered. The birds and mammals have largely disappeared...The biologically complex desert soil—which was once home to ephemeral grasses and small trees and which can take decades to recover once disturbed—looks like a cracked moonscape.” The article details many other such impacts. Source: Adam Federman, [Sierra](#).
- *President's Park* – There's a new national Christmas tree on the Ellipse. Last Saturday, the NPS planted a 30-foot Colorado blue spruce there to replace its predecessor, which had stood at the location for the past seven years. It was the victim of “assaults by man and nature” – a windstorm in 2014 inflicted damage and more damage was caused by someone who tried to climb it last year. There's been a live tree on the Ellipse since 1973. Source: Martin Weil, [Washington Post](#).
- *Redwood N&SP* – The park is in the process of demolishing and removing a former youth hostel building off Highway 101 in Del Norte County because of safety concerns. Major structural damage, seismic deficiencies, vandalism, and sensitivity to the cultural significance to the Tolowa and Yurok people motivated the decision. The hostel was closed for public safety in 2010. Since then, the park has worked unsuccessfully to protect the property against vandals and squatters – gates, locks, plywood covers and routine patrols have not prevented trespass and illegal entry. Windows were broken, porch and interior wood was used for bonfires, walls were covered with graffiti, and drug paraphernalia and human waste accumulated inside and outside the building. Source: Marissa Papanek, [KRCR News](#).

- *Yellowstone NP* – The park recently published three reports from 2018 about bear management, wolves, and birds. Each annual report focuses largely on the health of these wildlife populations. Here are their respective links, with some quotes from each – the [Bear Management Annual Report](#) (“There were few bear-human conflicts inside of the park in 2018...However, managing visitors that stopped to view and photograph bears foraging in roadside meadows and thus creating large bear jams was a considerable management challenge”), [Bird Project Annual Report](#) (“We...observed over 3,100 individuals belonging to 82 species along three [Breeding Bird Survey] routes in the park”), and the [Wolf Project Annual Report](#) (“This year marks a 10-year period of relatively stable wolf numbers. While the reasons for this are unknown, a relatively stable elk population is likely a large factor”). Source: [Buckrail](#).
- *Yellowstone NP* – Park workers recently removed 438 visitor hats from Yellowstone’s hot springs. Most are thought to have gotten there by accident, probably due to being blown in by winds. The short article that follows has a picture of the collected hat. Source: Jennifer Gardiner, [KTVX](#).
- *Yosemite NP* – A landmark proposal to allow rental kayaks, canoes and electric-powered boats for the first time at Hetch Hetchy Reservoir is being considered by Secretary Bernhardt. For the past century, San Francisco water managers have taken a firm position to bar public access at its lakes, including Upper and Lower Crystal Springs, San Andreas and Pilarcitos in the 23,000-acre Crystal Springs Watershed on the Peninsula, and at Calaveras and San Antonio reservoirs near Sunol. Other water districts have followed suit, and across the region, the public is banned from boating at more than 40 lakes, a lack of public access believed to be unique in America. The effort to make the change is being led by Restore Hetch Hetchy and California Trout, Inc. Bernhardt has to date declined comment on the proposal. Source: Tom Stienstra, [San Francisco Chronicle](#).
- *Yosemite NP* – Although it’s been around since 1996 and you may well have seen it already, we’ve just become aware of a great video that Chapman University has posted on its webpage on the “firefall” that was conducted weekly from Glacier Point from 1872 to 1996. It includes interviews with some of the people who put it on. Check it out at the following link. Source: [Chapman University](#).

Briefly Noted

Other matters of interest pertaining to the parks and their people.

- *Santa Rosa Seasonal LE Program Closes Its Doors* – Santa Rosa Junior College’s executive leadership team has made the difficult decision to suspend offering the Park Ranger Law Enforcement Training Program due to the retirement of several key academy officials and to financial constraints. The suspension will occur during 2020, with some possibility that the program will be reconstituted in the future. In 1978, Santa Rosa Junior College was the first school to offer a seasonal law enforcement training program and currently is the longest running partner within the program. Since the 2016 implementation of the enhanced curriculum of 680 hours, the program has graduated 170 students. Source: National Park Service.

The Federal Government

The Administration

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

- *DOI Removes Controversial Change From Final FOIA Rule* – “The Interior Department has removed heavily criticized language from the final version of its public records rule that some

worried would give officials too much leniency in withholding documents,” reports *The Hill*. “The final iteration of the department’s Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) regulation issued Friday removes several proposed language changes that government watchdog groups argued would place an unlawful burden on public records seekers and offered the agency broader authority to reject requests that didn’t fit the more narrow request format...The changes in the final rule come as the Interior Department has faced mounting scrutiny over its public records policies, including an investigation by the Interior inspector general into its use of an ‘awareness review’ policy that allows political appointees to view documents in which they are referenced prior to release...The Interior Department did not return a request for comment on the reasons behind the changes to the final rule.” Source: Miranda Green, [The Hill](#).

- *States Sue Administration Over Weakening Of ESA* – Slightly belated news, but still of consequence: “Attorneys general in 17 states on [September 25th] made good on a promise to sue the Trump administration over rule changes that substantially weakened how Endangered Species Act protections are considered and enforced,” reported the *Washington Post*. The states will be challenging new rules “that would allow officials to decrease the amount of habitat threatened and endangered animals require to survive and [would] remove tools used by scientists to predict future harm to species as a result of climate change.” A number of environmental groups – Earthjustice for the Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, National Parks Conservation Association, WildEarth Guardians, and the Humane Society of the United States – also recently filed a similar suit against the administration. Source: Darryl Fears, [Washington Post](#).

House and Senate

News stories on legislation, hearings and other Congressional activities that either supplement or expand upon the “Congressional Actions” section above.

- *House Democrats Excoriate Conservatives For Aggravating Threats To Feds* – The last issue of this newsletter contained an article on a report from the [Government Accountability Office](#) regarding the increase in threats against federal land management agency employees, particularly in the West. On October 21st, the House Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on the report, with Democratic members contending that conservative Republicans who’ve voiced “skepticism of the federal government’s control of land in the western United States” have helped create a climate that’s led to such threats. “Members of a public lands panel on the House Natural Resources Committee voiced concern about rising attacks and abuse aimed federal law enforcement and other land management employees, though Republicans were careful to distinguish widespread frustrations over land use regulations from the relatively small number of individuals who have engaged in such harassment...‘We’re here because anti-government rhetoric dehumanizes government employees, period,’ said Rep. Raul Grijalva, who chairs the...committee. ‘And those employees are being threatened and harassed because they are doing their jobs.’ He added lawmakers ‘need to discuss how we improve their living and working conditions and what protections we extend to them.’” Source: Eric Katz, [Government Executive](#).

Climate and Conservation

This section covers the myriad interconnected, conservation-related threats that are transforming the national parks, their ecosystems, and the world ecosphere, often simultaneously.

National and Worldwide Issues

The Bad News – Reports on the national and international climate and conservation crisis.

- *A World On Fire* – The European Space Agency (ESA) has announced the development of an updated tool for tracking fires around the globe called the [Sentinel-3 World Fire Atlas](#). Data from the atlas shows that there were almost five times as many wildfires in August 2019

compared to August 2018; a detailed analysis reveals precisely where these fires have been occurring – mostly in Asia. The Copernicus Sentinel-3 mission recorded 79,000 fires in August this year, compared to just over 16,000 fires detected during the same period last year. These figures were achieved by using data from the Sentinel-3 World Fire Atlas Prototype, which is also able to provide a breakdown of these fires per continent. The data reveal 49% of fires were detected in Asia, around 28% were detected in South America, 16% in Africa, and the remaining were recorded in North America, Europe and Oceania. Said a representative from ESA: “We have never seen an increase of wildfires of this kind since the ATSR World Fire Atlas was created in 1995.” Source: EarthSky.com.

- *Farewell to the Paris Agreement* – “The Trump administration is preparing the formal withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement on climate change, according to three people briefed on the matter, a long expected move that nevertheless remains a powerful signal to the world,” reported the *New York Times* on October 23rd. “The official action sets in motion a withdrawal that still would take a year to complete under the rules of the accord. Abandoning the landmark 2015 agreement in which nearly 200 nations vowed to reduce planet warming emissions would fulfill one of President Trump’s key campaign promises while placing the world’s largest economy at odds with the rest of the globe on a top international policy priority.” Source: Lisa Friedman, New York Times.

The Good News – Reports on efforts to mitigate the national and international climate and conservation crisis.

- *Participants In Oceans Conference Commit Billions To Conserve Ocean* – The Our Ocean Conference concluded in Norway recently with 370 separate pledges for action to conserve the ocean made by governments, NGOs and private corporations, with a value of \$63 billion. Commitments were tallied under six categories – marine protected areas, climate change, marine pollution, maritime security, sustainable fisheries and sustainable blue economy – with climate change commitments getting the lion share of the funding at \$51 billion. Nearly 80% of the fund commitments came from the private sector. The conference was a different type of global meeting -- not based on a legal framework or executive agreement and not limited to governments as full participants -- which seems to have been one of the keys to its success. The conference was the idea of former Secretary of State John Kerry. 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 – or removal of those that aren’t:

- *Alaskan Parks* – Since this past May, UFWFS and the NPS have been receiving reports of dead and dying seabirds from the northern Bering and Chukchi seas, including near Bering Land Bridge National Preserve. From late June to early August, thousands of short-tailed shearwaters were reported dead and washing up on beaches in the Bristol Bay region or observed weakly attempting to feed from salmon gillnets in inland waters. By mid-August, the shearwater die-off had extended north; numbers were smaller, but locations were more widespread, stretching into the northern Bering and Chukchi seas along the coasts of Alaska and the Chukotka Peninsula of Russia. Puffins, murrelets, and auklets are also being reported, but at much lower numbers than shearwaters. Additionally, live short-tailed shearwaters have been observed in large numbers this August in the Gulf of Alaska, along the coasts of Glacier Bay and Kenai Fjords national parks, and bays of Kodiak Island. It is unusual to see this species in high abundance in these areas, as it is typically offshore and comes from the southern hemisphere to forage in the Bering and Chukchi seas during the summer and fall. Seabird die-offs have occurred occasionally in Alaska in the past, but there have been large die-offs annually since 2015. Dead birds examined from the Bering and Chukchi seas during these recent die-offs have been determined to have died of starvation. [See this report for more](#). Source: [Andrea Medeiros, FWS, and Peter Christian, NPS](#).

More reports next week...

The Coalition

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

- *CPANP Utah Action Group* – Phil Brueck is setting up a work group in conjunction with NPCA to deal with NPS issues in Utah. If you live in the state and are interested in getting involved, contact Phil at pbrueck@gmail.com.
- *DOI Reorganization* – CPANP sent a letter to Congressional appropriators reinforcing our position that the DOI reorganization is a bad idea and that the Department's position to use unobligated funds to accomplish this disastrous reorganization is very concerning to us. We also urged appropriators to add additional language in the appropriation bills that will ensure that the reorganization does not take place. You can read the letter [at this link](#).
- *FY 2020 Appropriations Bill* – CPANP has issued a statement on the 2020 appropriations bill for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. You can read the full text [at this link](#).
- *LWCF Funding* – An op-ed on LWCF funding by board member Maria Burks appeared in the September 27th edition of the *New York Daily News*. You can read it [at this link](#).
- *DOI Reorganization Disaster* – An op-ed on the DOI reorganization by board member Sarah Bransom appeared in the October 10th edition of *The Hill*. You can read it [at this link](#).
- *Bears Ears NM* – The Coalition and its partners submitted comments in support of the proposed closure of target shooting on certain lands within Bears Ears National Monument. You can read those comments [at this link](#).

Source: Emily Thompson, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator.

Park People

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:

- *Great Smoky Mountains NP* – Lisa Hendy is the park's new chief ranger. A bio of her appears in a publication put out by her alma mater, Auburn University, her alma mater. See the following link. Source: [The Newsroom, Auburn University](#).
- *Birmingham Civil Rights NM/Freedom Riders NM* – Kristofer "Kris" Butcher has been selected as superintendent of these two new areas. Source: [Birmingham News](#).
- *Yellowstone NP* – Sarah Davis has become the park's eighteenth chief ranger. She comes to Yellowstone from Natchez Trace, where she was chief ranger from 2012 to the present. Source: [Oil City News](#).
- *North Cascades NP* – Brandon Torres, who's been branch chief for emergency services at the Grand Canyon since 2012, is moving to North Cascades to become the park's chief ranger. Source: NPS.

- *High Plains Group* – Stuart West, who served as chief ranger at Acadia for the past 10 years, has become superintendent of the three National Park Service sites in the High Plains Group – Bent's Old Fort, Sand Creek Massacre, and Capulin Volcano. Source: [Mount Desert Islander](#).
- *Abraham Lincoln Birthplace NHP* – Catherine Bragaw has been selected as the park's new superintendent. She recently completed an acting superintendent detail at Women's Rights and Harriett Tubman. Source: [News-Enterprise](#).
- *Petrified Forest NP* – Jeannine McElveen has been chosen as the park's new superintendent. McElveen has worked for the National Park Service for more than 20 years, most recently as the superintendent at Hovenweep and Natural Bridges National Monuments in Utah. Source: [Arizona Daily Sun](#).
- *Upper Delaware S&RR* – Keith Winslow, who for the last decade has worked as a protection ranger at Delaware Water Gap, is now the chief ranger at Upper Delaware. Source: [Pocono Record](#).

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.

- *Big Cypress NP* – On the morning of October 8th, a single-engine Cessna 172 crashed in knee-deep water in an area of pine and cypress trees about four miles northeast of the Oasis visitor center. All three occupants were killed upon impact. The pilot, Jonathan Saunders was from Naples, Florida; his two passengers - Craig Johnson of Greeneville, Tennessee, and Scott Shull, of Springfield, Missouri - were researchers from the University of Tennessee who were employing telemetry to track the endangered Florida panther. Three hunters in the area saw the Cessna just before it went down. They were interviewed by park and NTSB officials, but neither NTSB nor FAA have yet released any information on the cause of the accident. NTSB is having the wreckage removed from the park and will examine it again after removal. Submitted by IC Marty Huseman.
- *Yellowstone NP* – In late September, Chad Beus, 24, of Salt Lake City, Utah, was indicted by a federal grand jury on three counts associated with the killing of a large elk on the night of September 18, 1993. The poaching incident was highly publicized by regional and national news media, in part because the large bull elk had been readily visible from the road during rut and had been the center of attention for numerous wildlife photographers and cinematographers. The elk was shot during the night and its antlers were removed. The indictment followed a year-long cooperative investigation involving Yellowstone rangers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Wyoming State Crime Lab, the FBI and the U.S. Attorney's Office. Beus was arrested by FBI agents in Salt Lake City on Sunday, September 25th. Submitted by Assistant Chief Ranger Mike Murray.
- *Presidio of San Francisco* – On September 21st, Western Region's all-risk incident management team under incident commander Dwayne Collier assumed management of the many events associated with "From Post to Park", the official transition of the Presidio of San Francisco from the Army to the National Park Service. The event began with a kick-off on September 24th that featured a reception by Secretary Babbitt and a speech by Vice-President Gore. A week of events will follow, culminating this weekend with appropriate ceremonies and interpretive programs. Other events include Vietexpo, a Vietnamese trade show scheduled in lower Fort Mason (which is expected to bring demonstrators), an intertribal Friendship House pow wow, an international multi hull regatta, a motorcycle rally, several festivals and fairs, and the annual Bridge to Bridge Run, which draws many thousands of runners. The finish line for the latter has been moved to the Parade Ground on the Presidio. Several protest marches, rallies and/or demonstrations are anticipated from a variety of special interest groups. This event

also coincides with San Francisco Fleet Week, featuring visits by Navy vessels and aerobatic demonstrations by the Blue Angels. Submitted by Regional Chief Ranger Phil Ward.

Acknowledgements

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

- Production: Steve Pittleman
- Regular Correspondents: Don Hellmann, Dennis Burnett, Rick Smith, and Duncan Morrow
- Issue Contributors: Mark Forbes, Tom Haraden, Bob Martin, Bill Walters

If you see something that might be of interest to Coalition members, send it to Bill Halainen at the Weekly National Park System Report: BHalainen@gmail.com. Please don't submit them via his personal email address or Facebook page.

A Closing Observation

"I must say that one of the more rewarding aspects of being president has been visiting our national parks and getting to know the people who get up every day and put on the National Park Service uniform. It is amazing, the level of talent, training and commitment those people bring to this job, and the sacrifices, financial and other, that they're willing to accept to do the work that they love."

President Bill Clinton, November 12, 1996

* * * * *

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](#).

--- ### ---