



The Coalition Weekly Report Wednesday, November 6, 2019

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Incidents

Ozark NSR Two Convicted Of ARPA Violations

An investigation that began in 2017 has concluded with the conviction and sentencing of two people who conducted an illegal excavation within the park.

Shane Munroe, 41, has been ordered to serve a year in federal prison followed by three years of supervised probation; Christy Bruton, 45, has been sentenced to three years supervised probation. Each must also pay \$2,000 in restitution.

Rangers contacted Munroe and Bruton on April 2, 2017 at a primitive campsite at Rymers Campground in the park. They were suspected of excavating, damaging, and altering an archeological site in the area. These activities are in violation of 16 USC § 470ee-II, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (ARPA).

Munroe and Bruton fled the scene in a pickup truck, subsequently flipping the truck and continuing to flee on foot. Rangers and NPS special agents located evidence of extensive excavation and damage at the involved archeological site. They also recovered evidence and artifacts from the campsite and vehicle crash site. Munroe and Bruton later returned to the campsite and were taken into custody.

During the investigation, approximately 150 illegal excavations were located, as well as tools, artifacts, and evidence of other stolen property. A resource damage assessment, completed in March 2018, revealed that the pair caused \$34,974 in damage to the archeological site.

Source: [National Park Service](#).

Klondike Gold Rush NHP Hiker Bitten By Bear On Chilkoot Trail

A hiker was bitten on the leg by a brown bear while hiking the park's Chilkoot Trail on Tuesday, October 29th, but was able to get to a nearby NPS cabin and summon help via a park radio.

A multi-agency rescue was launched that involved personnel from the park, Skagway FD, and TEMSCO Helicopter. The hiker was found at the Canyon City ranger cabin, which is located around mile seven on the trail.

The hiker was then transported via helicopter to the Dahl Memorial Clinic for medical treatment.

Source: [KTUU News](#).

National Park System Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents

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

- *Valley Forge NP* – Although not reported in either this newsletter or its antecedent, the Morning Report, the 1971 theft of a rare Revolutionary War-era rifle from a display case at what was then Valley Forge State Park is a well-known incident in NPS historical parks, at least in the East. On November 1st, the F.B.I.'s art crime team and other law enforcement officials returned the antique to the Pennsylvania Society of Sons of the Revolution during a ceremony at the Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia. It will go on display there today. The rifle was taken in broad daylight from what was thought to be a theft-proof display case at the visitor center at Valley Forge State Park; the crime has never been solved. The rifle, made by Johann Christian Oerter, was recognized by a collector who'd purchased it with some other weapons and notified the FBI. A similar Oerter rifle recently fetched \$200,000 at an auction. Source: Karen Zraick, [New York Times](#).

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center National Preparedness Level Drops To PL 1

The national preparedness level has dropped to PL 1. The Northern California and Southern California areas, however, are each at Preparedness Level 2. Ten large fires were burning in four western states on Monday. One new large fire was reported in California.

Note: NIFC is suspending daily incident reporting due to lack of activity most everywhere. This will accordingly be the last weekly update to appear in this newsletter.

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

- *New Threats To Wildland Firefighter Health* – The *New York Times* ran an article on November 1st about two growing threats to wildland firefighters – the increasing ferocity of fires, which is well known, and, due to the number of burning buildings in the growing wildland-urban interface, manmade products and the gases and particles they produce, which is less well known. In 2017, researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, working with the San Francisco Firefighters Cancer Prevention Foundation, analyzed blood and urine samples of about 150 wildland firefighters who'd fought the Tubbs Fire in Santa Rosa. They found that in their blood many had elevated levels of mercury, as well as perfluoroalkyl substances, human-made chemicals known as PFAS, which have been linked to cancer. The article talks about what can and cannot be done to fight this new threat to firefighters. Source: Julie Turkewitz, [New York Times](#).

Resource Commitment Trend

Category	October 22nd	October 29th	November 5th
Area Command Teams	0	0	0
NIMO Teams	0	0	0
Type 1 Teams	1	1	2
Type 2 Teams	1	0	0
Crews	49	117	86
Engines	125	886	418
Helicopters	13	46	18

Total FF/Overhead	2,069	7,346	4,352

Fires/Acreage

Category	2019 Total	2009-2018 Ave	2019 Variance
United States: YTD Fires	44,929	54,518	- 18%
United States: YTD Acres	4,567,017	6,548,396	- 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 31 - The Senate passed [H.R. 3055](#), making appropriations for the Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2020, by a vote of 84 yeas to 9 nays. This legislation includes funding for the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service for FY 2020. While final bill language showing all approved funding levels was not available as of the time of this report, the [October 23rd edition of this newsletter](#) has a summation of those recommended by the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee (see entry for September 26). During consideration of the legislation, the Senate defeated an amendment by Sen. Paul to reduce the amounts appropriated to be 2 percent less than the amounts appropriated for fiscal year 2019. The amendment was defeated by a vote of 24 yeas to 67 nays.

October 31 – The Senate passed the following:

- [S. Res. 399](#), designating November 2, 2019, as “National Bison Day”.
- [S. Res. 401](#), recognizing the month of October 2019 as Filipino American History Month and celebrating the history and culture of Filipino Americans and their immense contributions to the United States.
- [H.R. 2423](#), to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, giving women in the United States the right to vote.

October 31 – The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources held a hearing on:

- [S. 1665](#), to modify the procedures for issuing special recreation permits for certain public land units.
- [S. 1723](#), to amend the Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996 to provide for the establishment of a Ski Area Fee Retention Account.
- [S. 1967](#), to promote innovative approaches to outdoor recreation on Federal land and to increase opportunities for collaboration with non-Federal partners.

Testimony was heard from Chris French, Deputy Chief, National Forest System, Forest Service, Department of Agriculture; Nikki Haskett, Acting Assistant Director for National Conservation Lands

and Community Partnerships, Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior; and public witnesses.

House Actions

October 28 – The House passed the following bills:

- [H.R. 1865](#), to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint a coin in commemoration of the opening of the National Law Enforcement Museum in the District of Columbia.
- [H.R. 2423](#), to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, giving women in the United States the right to vote.

October 29 – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands held a hearing on:

- [H.R. 139](#), to establish the Springfield Race Riot National Historic Monument in the State of Illinois.
- [H.R. 486](#), to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of Chicano Park, located in San Diego, California.
- H.R. 3250, to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of the sites associated with the life and legacy of the noted American philanthropist and business executive Julius Rosenwald, with a special focus on the Rosenwald Schools.
- [H.R. 3824](#), to establish the Cahokia Mounds Mississippian Culture National Historical Park in Collinsville, Illinois, Monroe, Madison, and St. Clair Counties, Illinois, and St. Louis City County, Missouri.
- [H.R. 4139](#), to provide for the boundary of the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park to be adjusted to authorize the donation of land to the United States for addition to that historic park.

Testimony was heard from members of Congress, R. David Vela, Deputy Director, National Park Service, Department of the Interior; and public witnesses.

October 29 – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife held a hearing entitled “[A Sea of Problems: Impacts of Plastic Pollution on Oceans and Wildlife](#)”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

October 29 – The Committee on Oversight and Reform Subcommittee on Environment held a hearing entitled “[Trump's Wrong Turn on Clean Cars: The Effects of Fuel Efficiency Rollbacks on the Climate, Car Companies and California](#)”. Testimony was heard from members of the Senate and public witnesses. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

October 29 – The Committee on Small Business Subcommittee on Innovation and Workforce Development held a hearing entitled “[Creating the Clean Energy Workforce](#)”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

October 29 – The Committee on Veterans' Affairs approved, among other bills, [H.R. 1424](#), to amend Title 38, United States Code, to ensure the Secretary of Veterans Affairs permits the display of Fallen Soldier Displays in national cemeteries.

October 30 – The House passed the following bills:

- [H.R. 2181](#), to withdraw certain federal lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management in northern New Mexico, surrounding Chaco Canyon National Historical Park, Aztec Ruins National Monument, and 39 Chaco Culture Archeological Protection Sites designated in 1995, from entry, appropriation, and disposal under the public land laws; location, entry, and patent

under the mining laws; and operation of the mineral leasing and geothermal leasing laws and mineral materials laws, by a vote of 245 yeas to 174 nays.

- [H.R. 1373](#), to protect, for current and future generations, the watershed, ecosystem, and cultural heritage of the Grand Canyon region in the State of Arizona, by a vote of 236 yeas to 185 nays.

October 30 – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing entitled “[Sexual Harassment at the Department of the Interior](#)”. Testimony was heard from Mark Greenblatt, Inspector General, Office of the Inspector General, Department of the Interior; Susan Combs, Senior Advisor, Exercising the Authority of the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget, Department of the Interior; and a public witness.

October 30 – The Committee on Small Business held a hearing entitled “[Force of Nature: The Power of Small Businesses in America’s Recreational Infrastructure](#)”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

October 30 – The Select Committee on the Climate Crisis held a hearing entitled “[Solving the Climate Crisis: Opportunities in Agriculture](#)”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

October 31 – The House passed [H.R. 823](#), to provide for the designation of certain wilderness areas, recreation management areas, and conservation areas in the State of Colorado. The bill passed by a vote of 227 yeas to 182 nays. Among other provisions, the bill removes a 15.5-acre parcel of land from potential wilderness within Rocky Mountain National Park (section 109); and establishes in statute the Curecanti National Recreation Area in CO (title IV). Curecanti NRA is one of just a couple of National Park System units that have never been legislatively established by Congress. Currently, the NRA is managed under a cooperative agreement between the NPS and the Bureau of Reclamation.

[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.

- *More On The Push To Privatize NPS Campgrounds* – The October 23rd issue of this newsletter contained an item on a proposal by DOI’s Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee to privatize and modernize NPS campgrounds. The November 4th edition of the *Los Angeles Times* adds more information on this proposal under a headline that’s bound to get your attention: “Trump team has a plan for national parks: Amazon, food trucks and no senior discounts.” Here are some excerpts: “At the urging of a controversial team of advisors,” writes the author, “the Trump administration is mulling proposals to privatize national park campgrounds and further commercialize the parks with expanded Wi-Fi service, food trucks and even Amazon deliveries at tourist camp sites. Leaders of the Interior Department’s ‘Made in America’ Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee say these changes could make America’s national parks more attractive to a digitally minded younger generation and improve the quality of National Park Service facilities amid a huge maintenance backlog. As part of its plan, the committee calls for blacking out senior discounts at park campgrounds during peak holiday seasons....But the group’s proposals face angry opposition from conservation organizations and senior citizen advocates, who call them a transfer of public assets to private industry, including businesses led by executives appointed to the Outdoor Advisory Committee...Critics say the administration is engaged in a self-fulfilling prophesy, arguing that private industry can deliver better than the public sector even as the White House starves public agencies of resources. But what really angers opponents is how corporate donors and businesses with a vested interest in park privatization have been invited by the Trump administration to offer proposals for further concession opportunities...” Here’s one of their new ideas: “The committee’s proposals would make their concession contracts more profitable than ever. They call for ‘categorical

permissions' to sidestep environmental impact reviews for campground expansion and development..." For more, read the full article at the following link. Source: Louis Sahagun, [Los Angeles Times](#).

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.

- *Death Valley NP* – It may be a little too late to make arrangements to get over there, but it's nonetheless worth noting that the park will be sponsoring two reenactments – one this Friday and the other this Saturday – in which a 20 mule team will pull replica borax wagons from The Inn at Death Valley to Harmony Borax Works and back. In the 1880s, teamsters used 18 mules and 2 horses to pull 20 tons of borax—plus the mules' drinking water—165 miles across the desert to the railroad at Mojave. The mule teams only operated in Death Valley for six years, but their legend lived on through the Death Valley Days radio and TV show, and the "20 Mule Team Borax" brand. The replica wagons include two freight wagons weighing four tons apiece with a capacity of 10 tons and a 1,200 gallon water wagon. They were built with the same methods and materials used to build the original versions by wagonmaker Dave Engel. Efforts to build historically accurate wagons were led by the Death Valley Conservancy and mule expert Bobby Tanner, who will drive his mule team using the same techniques, pioneered more than 130 years ago. Source: [Sierra Sun Times](#).
- *Delaware Water Gap NRA* – Park headquarters has been closed down for a thorough renovation that's expected to take at least a year. During the closure, visitor services operations will be relocated to the Bushkill Meeting Center on Route 209; employees with offices at park headquarters have been relocated to other offices throughout the park. The renovation includes replacement of the existing electrical, tele-data and telephone systems and replacement of an accessible elevator at the headquarters complex. The work requires a complete shutdown of electricity to the building during key portions of the renovations. The project will replace old and outdated building components, bring the facility into compliance with current building codes, and restore accessibility to both floors of the headquarters building. Source: Bruce Scruton, [New Jersey Herald](#).
- *Lake Clark NP&P* – The park opened its second public use cabin on October 22nd, offering visitors an opportunity to step into the shoes of a mid-century cabin builder, prospector, and commercial fisherman. Visitors can now stay in his cabin, hike the trail toward his prospect and explore the Lake Clark country he lived in for 40 years. The cabin was originally built by long-time Lake Clark resident Joe Thompson in 1962, who'd lived in the area since the 1930s. The cabin is located at the base of the newly revitalized Portage Creek Trail on the north shore of Lake Clark about 13 miles from Port Alsworth and is a day's paddle from the park's only other public use cabin, located at Priest Rock. Reservations can be made through www.recreation.gov; trip planning information for Lake Clark National Park is available at www.nps.gov/lakeclark. Source: Megan Richotte, [Bristol Bay Times](#).
- *Point Reyes NS* – The lighthouse at Point Reyes will reopen to the public on Friday, November 8th, following the completion of a 13-month-long, \$5.7 million restoration project – the most extensive rehabilitation done on this historic structure since it was commissioned in 1870. Improvements include restoration of the lighthouse's lens and clockworks, replacement of roofing, replacement of the glazing assembly, repair of water and rust damage, blast cleaning of all cast and wrought iron components, and application of fresh paint. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#).
- *Yosemite NP* – Correction: The entry in the last issue that said that the park's historic "fire fall" was conducted weekly at Glacier Point from 1872 to 1996 was in error, a typo on the editor's part. It should have read 1872 to 1968. For the original story, see this link: [Chapman University](#).

- *Yosemite NP* – It’s been 45 years since *Sierra*, a television series about rangers in Yosemite, appeared on television, evidently prompting producers to take a shot at a similar show for a new generation (or two) of viewers. The following is excerpted from *Deadline*, a publication that features the latest news from Hollywood: “CBS has put in development *The Trail*, a one-hour drama from writer David Harrington Miller (*Rosewood*); Wilmer Valderrama and his WV Entertainment; and CBS Television Studios, where WV is under a deal. Written by Miller, *The Trail* revolves around an elite unit of investigators within the U.S. National Park Service who work to solve the highest-profile cases in Yosemite National Park, a location known for its rare beauty and extraordinary danger....Miller was a writer on Fox’s *Rosewood*. Before that 2015-17 series, he was a writers’ assistant on Netflix’s *House of Cards*. Valderrama [currently] plays Special Agent Nick Torres on NCIS” The article either didn’t have the date of the premier or hid it somewhere; if you know any details, would you pass them on? Source: Dennise Petski, [Deadline](#).

The Federal Government

News from around the federal government – including DOI, kindred agencies and the courts – of consequence to the NPS.

- *DOI Grounds Drone Fleet* – The Department has grounded its entire fleet of more than 800 UAVs out of concern for Chinese spying and drone-aided cyberattacks. Why? Every drone in use by Interior was either manufactured in China or uses some Chinese-made parts and may therefore be employed in Chinese spying or drone-aided cyberattacks. DOI issued this statement: “Secretary Bernhardt is reviewing the Department of the Interior’s drone program. Until this review is completed, the Secretary has directed that drones manufactured in China or made from Chinese components be grounded unless they are currently being utilized for emergency purposes, such as fighting wildfires, search and rescue, and dealing with natural disasters that may threaten life or property.” Source: Nick Statt, [The Verge](#).
- *Article Highlights Causes For Insufficient Monitoring Of Volcanoes* – A September issue of the *New York Times* focuses on the “thicket of red tape and regulations [that] have made it difficult for volcanologists to build monitoring stations along Mount Hood and other active volcanoes.” The United States is home to 161 active volcanoes, many of which form a line along the west coast through California, Oregon, Washington and Alaska. Seven of the 10 most dangerous American volcanoes are within the Cascade Range, and six of those are not adequately monitored. A key problem concerns construction of monitoring stations in wilderness areas, which has meant that it’s taken years to get approval for such stations. Another is lack of funding: “Volcanologists across the nation were pleased this March when Congress passed the National Volcano Early Warning and Monitoring System Act, which seeks to ensure that volcanoes nationwide are adequately monitored. But the bill is only an authorization — meaning that Congress has not actually invested the \$55 million over five years required to apply for new permits, install more equipment and pay to monitor 34 of the nation’s most dangerous volcanoes.” Source: Shannon Hall, [New York Times](#).

The Coalition

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

- *Privatizing NPS Campgrounds* – The Coalition issued a statement addressing the recent recommendations to privatize more NPS campgrounds and allow services such as wi-fi and food trucks. The statement touches on several areas of concern, including the negative impacts to visitors due to a likely increase in noise pollution and overcrowding. Read the statement [at this link](#).

- *Alaskan Park Road Proposal* – Thanks to the hard work of several executive committee members and the assistance of a dedicated group of CPANP members from Alaska, the Coalition submitted comprehensive comments to the NPS on the draft environmental and economic analysis (EEA) for the Ambler Road project. CPANP also submitted similar comments to BLM regarding their draft EIS for the same project. Our conclusion: “Absent more thoughtful planning and analysis by the respective federal agencies, the pristine resources of Gates of the Arctic National Preserve, Kobuk Valley National Park, and the Noatak National Preserve are at grave risk of significant long-term adverse impacts if this project is implemented based primarily on the applicant’s wishes.” The comments to the NPS can be found [at this link](#); comments to BLM can be found [at this link](#).

Source: Emily Thompson, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator.

Park People

NPS Alumni Passing Of Dan Riss

Dan Riss, 76, the long-time metal conservator at Harpers Ferry Center, passed away on October 2nd at Hospice of the Panhandle in Kearneysville, West Virginia.

Dan was a member of the Harpers Ferry Town Council for 19 years, winning nine consecutive elections. As a walking book on Harpers Ferry history, Dan’s research papers and archiving of old photographs provide an invaluable and enduring treasure trove of information for the historic town. He proudly served in the U.S. Air Force from 1963 to 1967, with duty as a national security specialist stationed in Japan.

Before his retirement, Dan worked for over 25 years as a conservator with the National Park Service at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, with a specialty in the restoration and preservation of metal objects. Examples of Dan’s work can be found on display in interpretive center exhibits throughout the national park system.

A true renaissance man, Dan’s intellectual curiosity led him to explore many areas of interest; he possessed broad knowledge in a wide range of subjects, which he freely shared with others. His college studies included coursework and mentorships in architecture (U.C. Berkeley), photography (Los Angeles), and history and other studies (U.C. Hayward).

An enthusiastic movie fan and critic himself, Dan appeared as an “extra” in the movie *Sweet Dreams*, which was filmed at the Rainbow Lounge outside of Charles Town, West Virginia. He also appeared in the American Playhouse production of Mark Twain’s *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, which was filmed in Harpers Ferry.

In addition to his parents, Dan is preceded in death by brother Stephen Allen Riss, and sister Barbara Ann Pratt. A private service for scattering his ashes will be held in the San Francisco Bay area, where he will join his ancestors.

A local celebration of life for Dan will be held in early November, with date and location to be announced. Remembrances may be made by helping the living in need at: Doctors Without Borders, 40 Rector Street, 16th Floor, New York, NY 10006, or Hospice of the Panhandle at hospice@hospiceotp.org .

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:

- *Isle Royale NP* – Phyllis Green, the park’s superintendent for the past 18 years, has retired. A successor will be named within the next three to six months. Source: [WLUC](#).
- *Colorado NM* – Nathan Souder has taken over as the park’s new superintendent. The monument's last superintendent, Ken Mabery, retired at the end of April. Source: [Daily Sentinel](#).

From The Archives

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

- *Yosemite NP* – In the early morning hours of October 4th, the park was hit by an unpredicted storm in which Yosemite Valley received approximately two inches of rain over a 24 hour period. Since fall is the peak of the big wall climbing season in Yosemite, there were many parties on El Capitan, and several were signalling for rescue by early afternoon. Because of the bad weather, helicopters were unable to fly. A ground approach to the top of El Capitan was accordingly begun that afternoon. Approximately 40 people and a string of mules were used to haul equipment over the eight miles of trail to the summit of El Cap in a continuous downpour. When it got dark, the rain turned to snow above the 7,000-foot level. It snowed most of the night, and the entire team spent an extremely unpleasant wet and cold night. About half a foot of snow fell in the area. The precipitation stopped by morning, permitting team members to set up a lowering operation at the top of the Nose. Rescuers were lowered 600 feet to Camp Six on the Nose route. Nine stranded climbers from four countries, who spoke three different languages, were squeezed on a ledge which is considered crowded with three people on it. Four of them were in early stages of hypothermia. With the assistance of rescuers, all nine ascended the ropes to the top. While the group from the Nose was ascending, a party of two Americans on the Salathé Wall route signaled that they also needed to be rescued. As a rescuer was being lowered the 700 feet to them, a third party, comprised of a Norwegian and an Englishman, yelled from their position on the Sunkist route that they could not make it through another night. They were hanging in a porta-ledge which was in a small waterfall and their gear was completely soaked. After NPS rescuers reached them and the weather improved, all 13 victims ascended the fixed ropes to the top under their own power and were eventually flown off by helicopter. Several were transferred to the Yosemite clinic for treatment of cold injuries to their hands and feet. All gear and personnel were flown off the following day. Submitted by Yosemite NP.
- *Big Thicket NP* – A "meteorological nightmare" occurred over southeast Texas on October 17th when a slow moving cold front, the remains of Hurricane Rosa, and warm moist air collided, causing over 30 inches of rain to fall on the area. President Clinton declared a national disaster in 26 Texas counties the following day. The park lies within six of these counties. Although the heavy rainfall ended late on October 18th, the situation in the area remains serious. Waters in the Neches River and in local creeks and bayous are well above flood stage, and numerous roads are still closed, including State Highway 105 and I-10 between Houston and Beaumont. Water across SH 105 was still rising on Friday. Pine Island Bayou was expected to crest at 37.5 feet above flood level at Sour Lake during the day and maintain that crest for up to 12 hours. Village Creek crested at 25.4 feet above flood level on Tuesday night at Kountze. The Corps of Engineers advised park staff that they would continue to open the floodgates at B.A. Steinhagen Reservoir on Friday until they attained maximum flow. Releases on Thursday reached 22,057 cubic feet per second (cfs). The Corps has advised that the release rate at maximum flow would be somewhere between 35,000 and 40,000 cfs by sometime during early morning hours on Saturday. This high flow was expected to cause additional flooding on the Neches River, which officials said would crest at 12 feet above flood level at Beaumont on Saturday. A backflow of water from the river was expected at both Pine Island Bayou and Village Creek. ICS has been implemented in the park, and rangers from Jean Lafitte have arrived to provide assistance. The park has been working cooperatively with

local agencies on road blockades and on search and other operations. It is not yet possible to estimate the damage caused to the park. Until the water recedes, most areas will remain inaccessible. Submitted by Superintendent Ron Switzer.

- *New River Gorge NR* – On Saturday, October 15th, the park hosted Bridge Day, an annual event in which one lane of the bridge is closed off so pedestrians can view fall colors and watch BASE jumpers and rappellers parachute or rappel from the bridge. An estimated 200,000 people attended the event this year. The 430 parachutists who registered for the event made about 560 BASE jumps from the 876-foot-high bridge; another 155 persons rappelled or climbed ropes that were up to 650 feet long. A 400-foot tyrolean traverse was set up on one side of the bridge and a Canadian rescue organization led numerous traverses. There were fewer injuries and emergency incidents than in previous years, at least partly due to the beautiful weather and low winds. There were only 60 water landings, one tree landing, and 12 injuries (seven requiring transport to local hospitals for broken bones) associated with BASE jumping activities. Rangers arrested three jumpers on outstanding warrants for BASE jumping off of El Capitan in Yosemite and for failure to appear at court. Submitted by District Ranger Rick Brown.

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: Bill Walters, Bruce Craig

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

"National Park Service work is humanitarian in nature, philosophical in purpose, and you might say cultural in impact. In short, we're not dealing with purely practical considerations. Important though practice may be and inevitable as problems may be, in the back of all this is a feeling of humanitarianism...a philosophy. We're dealing with people and with people's happiness, we're dealing with people's needs."

Author, environmentalist and wilderness advocate [Sigurd F. Olson](#)

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

The Coalition is a non-profit organization of past and current NPS employees and their allies that "studies, educates, speaks, and acts for the preservation and protection of the National Park System and mission-related programs of the National Park Service."

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