

The Coalition Weekly Report Wednesday, February 6, 2019

Volume 3

Number 5

Incidents

Wrangell-St. Elias NP&P Three Plead Guilty To Guiding Illegal Big-Game Hunts In Park

A federal illegal hunting case involving three men working in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, reports the *Anchorage Daily News*, has also cost renowned Alaska pilot Urban Rahoi the right to guide hunts at the lodge he has operated for decades near the Canadian border.

Rahoi, who just turned 100, built Ptarmigan Lake Lodge in the 1970s on an inholding near Beaver Creek within the rugged country of Wrangell-St. Elias.

Rahoi was issued a federal violation notice in 2017 for illegal bait sites that were part of an apparent scheme to control predators by drawing bears to bait as well as putting poison in dead rabbits to kill wolves. The case cost him both his NPS concession to guide hunts from his lodge and his own hunting guide license -- the first one handed out after Alaska statehood.

The three men, all lodge employees, were sentenced on January 18th after pleading guilty to misdemeanor and felony charges related to illegal big-game hunts. The charges include allowing outof-state hunters to kill Dall sheep without a guide, as required by state game laws, and falsifying hunt records to cover up their crimes. Two of them also killed bears and sheep illegally.

They are Casey Richardson, 48, of Montana; Jeffrey Harris, 45, of Washington, who worked as a horse wrangler and performed lodge maintenance; and Dale Lackner, a 74-year-old from Haines who was initially the only licensed assistant guide of the three. Richardson and Harris were also charged with poisoning predators at multiple unregistered bait stations in 2014 and 2015.

Source: Zaz Hollander, Anchorage Daily News.

Cape Hatteras NS Wreckage Of Sunken Shrimp Trawler Comes Ashore In Park

Rangers were called out in the pre-dawn hours on February 4th to assist the Coast Guard and Hatteras Island Rescue Squad in a search for an overturned vessel near Cape Point.

The vessel, a shrimp trawler named *Big John*, was found broken apart a half mile north of ORV Ramp 49 near Frisco. The three members of the boat's crew were taken by ambulance to the hospital for medical evaluations. The cause of the accident is unknown.

Due to the large debris field created by the trawler's wreckage (shown in two photos contained in the park's press release), the beach between ORV Ramps 48 and 49 has been temporarily closed. It will be reopened once the wreckage is cleared.

Source: Mike Barber, Cape Hatteras NS.

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

January 10 – The president signed into law H.R. 6602, to reauthorize the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route. (Public Law 115–431).

January 16 – The president signed into law S. 24, to provide for the compensation of Federal and other government employees affected by lapses in appropriations. (Public Law 116–1).

January 25 – The president signed into law 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 15, 2019. (Public Law 116–5).

Senate Actions

January 29 – The Committee on the Budget held a hearing to examine the Congressional Budget Office's budget and economic outlook, focusing on fiscal years 2019–2029.

House Actions

January 29 – The House passed H. Res. 77, expressing the sense of Congress that financial institutions and other entities should work proactively with their customers affected by the shutdown of the federal government who may be facing short-term financial hardship and long-term damage to their creditworthiness through no fault of their own.

January 29 – The Committee on the Budget held an organizational meeting and adopted its rules for the 116th Congress. The committee also held a hearing entitled ``The Congressional Budget Office's Budget and Economic Outlook''.

January 29 – The Committee on Oversight and Reform held an organizational meeting and adopted its rules for the 116th Congress.

January 30 - The House passed:

- H.R. 790, to provide for a pay increase in 2019 for certain civilian employees of the Federal Government. This bill increases by 2.6% the rates of basic pay for most federal civilian employees for 2019. It bars a pay increase for the Vice President and certain senior political appointees. The bill passed by a vote of 259 ayes to 161 noes.
- H. Res. 79, expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that Government shutdowns are detrimental to the Nation and should not occur. The resolution passed by a vote of 249 yeas to 163 nays.

January 30 – The Committee on Appropriations held an organizational meeting and adopted its rules for the 116th Congress.

January 30 – The Committee on Natural Resources held an organizational meeting and adopted its rules for the 116th Congress.

National Park Service

National Park System

NPCA Article Describes Impact Of Shutdown On Park Employees – On January 31st, NPCA's blog featured a story entitled "Park Staff Ordered to Violate Laws and Stand Aside as People Trashed Parks During Shutdown." It opens with this overview: "During the shutdown, the Trump administration directed National Park Service staff to keep most parks open to visitors despite the agency having only a skeleton crew of 'essential staff' on duty to protect them. This decision, which violates <u>at least four federal laws</u>, led to alarming reports of illegal activity and destruction across the country. During the shutdown, park visitors killed trees, harassed wildlife, drove off-road vehicles over sensitive ecosystems, vandalized buildings, destroyed historic artifacts and dumped tons of trash on some of America's most beloved lands, among other crimes." It then segues to an interview with Karen McKinlay-Jones, who retired as chief ranger at Death Valley at the end of 2018, in which she describes how rangers tried to take measures to protect the park but were ordered to leave it largely unprotected. The article goes on to quote others about the impacts of the shutdown, which they say has had a terrible impact on morale. Source: Jennifer Errick, <u>National Parks Conservation Association</u>.

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.

- *Cape Lookout NS* Due to diminished visitation during the shutdown and to several storms that were accompanied by strong currents and tides, park beaches are now covered with sea shells and the park has reportedly become "a shell collector's paradise." The ocean's bounty included both quantity and variety, with many types of shells prized by collectors. Source: Mark Price, <u>*Charlotte News and Observer*</u>.
- *Cumberland Gap NHP* The park reports that there were no serious incidents during the shutdown. A small building where cave tours begin will have to be gutted after a pipe burst in the freezing weather. Some vehicles would not start because batteries died while sitting idle more than a month. Source: Jim Matheny, <u>WBIR News</u>.
- *Grand Canyon NP* Due to the shutdown, the park has put a hold on its annual lottery for permits for self-guided rafting trips on the Colorado River. The lottery usually begins on February 1st, with thousands of people vying for launch dates during the ensuing year. The lottery is now scheduled to begin on February 16th and close in mid-March. That date was chosen because of another possible government shutdown on February 15th, which would further delay the lottery. Source: <u>Associated Press</u>.
- *Grand Staircase-Escalante NM* "A Canadian mining company has ditched its plans to extract copper, cobalt and other minerals from approximately 200 acres of land that the administration carved out of the boundary protecting the monument," reports the *Huffington Post*. Glacier Lake Resources Inc., a Vancouver-based copper and silver mining firm, has dropped the project, but declined to give a reason for doing so. Source: Chris D'Angelo, *Huffington Post*.
- *Great Smoky Mountains NP* Rangers have taken stock of damages incurred during the government shutdown and report that the park escaped the destruction experienced at Joshua Tree and elsewhere. Rangers did find that several tools had been stolen from a facility in Cosby (value not yet determined) and that there was also a break-in at a campground office. The office was closed for the season, though, and nothing was stolen. Source: Jim Matheny, <u>WBIR News</u>.

- *Mesa Verde NP* The park's reopening was delayed until February 4th by several large rockfalls that occurred on the main park road during the shutdown, causing damage to the road and guardrail. The rockfalls happened near the entrance at a spot between mile markers two and three. The visitor and research center remained closed while the repairs took place. Source: Tom Kackley, <u>KOAA News</u>.
- *Mount Rainier NP* Road crews and other park staff are scrambling to get the park reopened following the shutdown. That includes removing the massive amount of snow more than five feet that fell during the five-week period. A January 29th story in the *Washington Post* details their efforts; it also includes a number of photos of snow removal operations. Source: Lornet Turnbull, *Washington Post*.
- *Point Reyes NS* An *SF Gate* article in its January 30th edition opens with these intriguing sentences: "You know the saying: When the cat's away the mice will play. It appears the Bay Area is ready to coin a new turn of phrase: When the rangers are gone the elephant seals will swarm." The allusion is to an elephant seal colony in the park that expanded its normal range by taking over Drakes Beach. There they remained when the shutdown ended, causing the park to close the road from Sir Francis Drake Boulevard to the beach. The park is thinking of offering guided tours of the Drakes Beach elephant colony, similar to what's offered at Año Nuevo State Park, in order to keep from disturbing the animals. Source: Amy Graff, *SF Gate*.

Federal Government And Agencies

Recent news stories, web postings, statements, and press releases pertaining to Congress (excepting official business, which appears above), the administration, DOI, and other public land management agencies that have bearing on the NPS.

Administration and Government

President To Nominate David Bernhardt As DOI Secretary – "President Trump tweeted Monday that he will nominate David Bernhardt, a veteran lobbyist who has helped orchestrate the push to expand oil and gas drilling at the Interior Department, to serve as its next secretary," reported the *Washington Post* on February 4th. "If confirmed, Bernhardt, a 49-year-old Colorado native known for his unrelenting work habits, would be well positioned to roll back even more of the Obama-era conservation policies he has worked to unravel since rejoining Interior a year and a half ago. He has helmed the department as acting secretary since Jan. 2, when Ryan Zinke resigned amid multiple ethics probes." Although Bernhardt will likely be confirmed on a party line vote in the Senate, he still faces tough questioning in both House and Senate. "House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Raúl Grijalva has already indicated that he intends to call Bernhardt before his panel to testify about some of the department's policy decisions, and confirmation hearings in the Senate would allow Democrats to press for answers on an array of fronts." Source: Juliet Eilperin, Josh Dawsey and Darryl Fears, *Washington Post*.

Department of the Interior

Acting Secretary Authorizes Continuation Of Unconfirmed Appointees – "At the Interior Department, more than half a dozen major divisions lack Senate-confirmed leaders," reports the *Washington Post.* "But that's not slowing the department down: On Tuesday, acting Secretary David Bernhardt amended a secretarial order that will allow these appointees to keep serving until the end of May, if need be. The unusual move means that some of the most influential decision-makers at Interior will never have faced formal Senate scrutiny. The original order, which then-Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke signed on Nov. 13, stipulated that eight officials could head major sections of the department even though they had not been confirmed. The group includes principal deputy solicitor Daniel Jorjani; National Park Service deputy director P. Daniel Smith; and the Bureau of Land Management's deputy director for policy and programs Brian Steed... Along with the Justice Department, Interior has the highest level of vacancies in the federal government. Both departments have only filled 41 percent of their Senate-confirmed positions..." The amended secretarial order (No. 3345, Amendment No. 24) can be read at <u>this link</u>. Source: Juliet Eilperin, <u>Washington Post</u>.

Acting Secretary Chides DOI Agencies For Ethical Lapses – On February 3rd, Acting Secretary Bernhardt sent out a message entitled "Ethical Culture" to all DOI employees. The full text follows:

In our first full week back as a team, I have spent a good deal of time visiting with many of you. I believe each person who works at Interior has chosen to work here not only because he or she believes in serving the people first, but also because of the love for Interior's mission. Together, we can make the Department even better. We maintain these values even when our conclusions differ. I know this because I have served at Interior in various positions off and on for nearly a decade. No one dedicates a decade of his or her life to any organization unless he or she fundamentally believes in that organization's mission. My appreciation and affection for our mission is real and deeply felt, and I know yours is, too.

Therefore, as I have done as Deputy Secretary, I will continue to share a few personal perspectives from time to time while I am Acting Secretary. By doing so, I hope you will have a better sense of where I am trying to lead our Department.

PUBLIC SERVICE IS A HIGH CALLING

I believe that serving the public is one of the highest callings a person can undertake. This belief has been reaffirmed in the past few weeks as many of you carried on fulfilling the Department's mission with the knowledge that the timing of your pay was highly uncertain. This perspective is why the notion that a public servant would breach the public trust to enrich themselves so deeply offends me. Such conduct undermines everything I believe in regarding public service.

While serving as Deputy Secretary, I personally devoted a tremendous amount of effort to transforming and enhancing the ethics infrastructure throughout our organization. It has been badly neglected for far too long. I want to ensure that we have a functional and resilient ethics program that facilitates our ability to fully embrace a culture of ethical compliance that will endure beyond this Administration.

Sadly, our organization's ethics challenges were part of a mess that we inherited. The last decade of the Inspector General's reports read like an avalanche of ethical misconduct. No Bureau is exempt from criticism.

The fact that the Bureaus within the Department face serious ethical challenges is unsurprising when you review the Inspector General's reports, which call attention to a cavalier approach to ethics compliance. For example, in 2016, Jon Jarvis, then-Director of the National Park Service, who was also a career SES official, essentially stated after being confronted with his own ethical violations and delivering an "untruth" to the Secretary of the Interior, that he would have probably done the same thing again. The entire report can be accessed here.

Such a view is precisely the opposite of what a culture of ethical compliance looks like. Not seeking ethics advice creates an organizational culture that is deeply flawed. I know and appreciate that fact. When leaders are not seeking ethics counsel, why should anyone else?

I have been focused on putting the pieces in place to dramatically transform a culture of ethics avoidance into one of ethical compliance. We began to strengthen the ethics program by recruiting experienced, non-partisan, career ethics professionals with the dedication and leadership skills necessary to build a best-in-class program. By the end of Fiscal Year 2019, we will have doubled the number of career ethics officials that the previous Administration hired in its entire 8 years.

These new employees include a new Designated Agency Ethics Official (DAEO), an Alternate DAEO, a Financial Disclosure Supervisor, an Ethics Education and Training Supervisor with the Department's Ethics Office (DEO), as well as new Deputy Ethics Counselors at the National Park Service, Bureau of

Land Management, and other Bureaus and Offices. We will continue an aggressive recruitment of ethics officials through 2019.

The changes we have made to date, and the ones we are committed to making moving forward, are long overdue. Rather than give rhetorical lip service to ethical conduct, I have taken action. I am committed to leaving this Department better than I found it when I first started.

The Department will provide the necessary resources for you to seek ethics guidance. Please consult and listen to the ethics counselors.

CONCLUSION

I look forward to working with you as we carry out and balance the multitude of mandates and authorities that make up the organization we call the Department of the Interior. I believe we can and must do so in a way that is good for the natural environment, as well as the communities, families, and individuals whose livelihoods depend on our decisions.

Source: Department of the Interior.

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 – The news on climate and conservation issues these days is inevitably grim, but needs to be shared – mitigated, when and where possible, with good news, which follows. First the former:

- *Massive Melting In Major Antarctic Glacier* "The Thwaites Glacier on Antarctica's western coast has long been considered one of the most unstable on the continent," reports the *New York Times*. "Now, scientists are worried about the discovery of an enormous underwater cavity that will probably speed up the glacier's decay." The huge chamber under the glacier, which is about the size of Florida, once contained about 14 billion tons of ice, all of which melted over the course of three years. If the remainder melts, it'll raise ocean levels worldwide by more than two feet, threatening many coastal cities. The cavern's existence was first discovered about three years ago via NASA radar technology, which is flown above the glacier on airplanes and can penetrate deep below the surface of the ice. Source: Julia Jacobs, *New York Times*.
- Plants Will Absorb Less CO2 In Warming Climate On January 23rd, the journal Nature <u>published a study</u> in which researchers report that plants and soil may not absorb greenhouse gas emissions in the future as they are at present, thereby accelerating the rate of climate change. That's because increasing temperatures cause increased drying, and plants can't absorb as much CO2 when the soil is dry. At the same time, microorganisms in the soil, which are more productive when it's warm, release more CO₂. Source: Kendra Pierre-Louis, <u>New York Times</u>.

The Good News – Despite the continuous drumbeat of bad news on the climate and conservation fronts, some headway is being made in meeting and dealing with related issues:

• *Germany To Abandon All Coal Plants* – Germany, one of the world's biggest consumers of coal, will shut down all 84 of its coal-fired power plants over the next 19 years and will work to rely significantly on renewable energy to meet its international commitments in the fight against climate change. Although Germany was an early leader on climate issues and deployment of renewable energy, in recent years it began to fall behind in meeting its Paris Agreement emissions targets, making the recent announcement by a government commission a significant turning point for Europe's largest economy. The commission's recommendations are expected

to be adopted by Chancellor Angela Merkel's government. Source: Monica Medina and Miro Korenha, <u>Our Daily Planet</u>.

• New Mexico Joins Alliance Against Climate Change – Michelle Lujan Grisham, New Mexico's new governor, has committed her administration to aggressive targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions amid a boom in oil and natural gas production in the state, while endorsing goals of the 2015 Paris climate agreement to limit global warming. The state will pursue a 45 percent reduction in the emission of heat-trapping gases by 2030. New Mexico joins 19 other states already in the <u>U.S. Climate Alliance</u> that are are pursuing goals of the Paris agreement. Source: Morgan Lee, <u>Associated Press</u>.

National Park System Issues

Climate Change – News pertaining to the impacts of climate change on park lands, waters, species and other assets:

- *Cape Cod NS* A newly published University of Massachusetts study shows what many who deal with the stranding of sea turtles suspected," reports the *Cape Cod Times* that is, that "a rapidly warming Gulf of Maine appears linked to the steady, record-breaking increases in strandings on Cape Cod... A newly published University of Massachusetts study shows what many who deal with the stranding of sea turtles suspected: a rapidly warming Gulf of Maine appears linked to the steady, record-breaking increases in strandings on Cape Cod... Source: Doug Fraser, *Cape Cod Times*.
- *Colorado River Parks* Inside Climate News posted a story on its webpage on February 1st concerning the long-running struggle to manage the Colorado River and share its waters fairly: "The Colorado River watershed may be reaching a climate tipping point, drying under the influence of global warming to the point that states and tribes in the basin can no longer put off a day of reckoning about the water allocations that have been their lifeblood for the past century. [On the night of January 31st], Arizona joined other states that share the river basin in agreeing to voluntary water conservation plans. Its legislature approved a plan that helps balance the state's competing water rights with those of California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming, along with Native American tribes and Mexico. The states faced a Jan. 31 deadline for completing interstate contingency plans on water rights; without them, federal officials could order mandatory cuts later this year." Source: Bob Berwyn, <u>Inside Climate News</u>.

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

• Chaco Canyon NHP – BLM will be offering federal mineral rights on plots surrounding the park on March 28th despite widespread concerns and opposition, partly because BLM employees were allowed to continue working on the lease offerings even during the shutdown. Senator Tom Udall is among them: "It's a mistake that while critical public services were shuttered for 35 days ... BLM still moved forward with this opaque process to once again attempt to lease potentially culturally-significant and fragile land near Chaco Canyon for development. BLM leadership needs to listen to and consult with public and Tribal voices with historical ties to this land." Udall intends to reintroduce his bill protecting a wider swath of land around Chaco from development by establishing a "heritage withdrawal area." Source: Rebecca Moss, <u>Santa Fe New Mexican</u>.

The Coalition

CPANP Annual Newsletter – The Coalition's annual newsletter (Spring 2019, Volume 3, Issue 1) is now out and available. It includes an annual financial statement, reports from various committees, and a summary of Coalition actions. You can access the PDF file by <u>clicking on this link</u>.

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

- *Letter to Senator McConnell* The Coalition sent a letter to Senator McConnell on January 21st, urging him "to fully reopen our national parks and public lands by ending this government shutdown and passing appropriations for the Department of the Interior and other federal land management agencies." The text can be read at <u>this link</u>.
- DOI FOIA Rules The Coalition joined 146 other groups in submitting comments on changes that DOI is proposing in Freedom of Information Act rules that would decrease government transparency. The text can be read at <u>this link</u>.
- *Protecting Alaska's Carnivores* The Coalition's blog ("This Land Is Our Land") contains a new posting from member Sanford (Sandy) Rabinowitch on the state of Alaska's approach to bear and wolf wildlife management, which he describes as "a throw-back to an older time, when these predators were targeted for reductions in hopes that hunters would benefit from having more moose, caribou, and deer available as prey." He argues that "[enlightened] scientific management is needed to put Alaska back on the path to avoiding the errors in predator management of a century ago" and provides links to relevant articles and Coalition actions to protect such animals. The text can be read at this link.

Source: Emily Thompson, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator.

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.

- Olympic NP Just before midnight on January 30th, the park received a report that an adult and 13 children ranging in age from three to 14 years old were overdue from a hike up the North Fork trail to Wolf Bar and back. Friends and relatives had begun looking for them late that afternoon, but had not been available to find them. Rangers immediately began a search and soon found small footprints on a river bar about a mile from the trailhead. They were joined by other rangers, SAR teams and dog units; a helicopter began flying the area at first light. The group was found that morning and flown out to an airfield about eight miles away. Although cold and hungry, all members of the group were in good shape. No details are yet available as to how the group became lost. Submitted by Mark Forbes.
- Joshua Tree NP On January 28th, rangers discovered that the grave of prominent miner/pioneer Johnny Lang at Key's View had been excavated and ransacked. A hole five feet wide by four long by two deep was found in the grave; bones, presumably those of Lang, were found strewn around the hole. A local BLM archeologist was called in and the spoils pile and hole were excavated. More remains and clothing pieces were found and collected. These will be taken to a forensic anthropologist for identification. At this time, it appears that only the skull and some dirt were taken from the grave. Local media representatives were brought to the site during the archeological excavation in an attempt to gather information about the theft from the public. The investigation is continuing. Lang died in 1925 and was buried at Key's View near Bill Keys, another prominent pioneer. Submitted by Todd Swain.
- Olympic NP Late in January, rangers began a week-long search for a group of men who witnesses said were commercially harvesting ferns in the park. A vehicle associated with the group was located at the Third Beach parking area in the Mora Subdistrict on January 26th, and a stakeout of the area was begun. Four Chinese males with 22,700 fern fronds in their possession were apprehended. An interpreter had to be employed to communicate with the men, who said that they did not know they were in the park. A check of their permit for forested land adjacent to the park disclosed that it had expired in December. Further

investigation led rangers to a storage building at the suspects' residence that contained several hundred bales of recently picked ferns. Initial estimates were that several acres of park land on the coastal strip of the park had been completely denuded of ferns. The ferns have a total value of several thousand dollars. It's believed that this group is only one of several illegally harvesting forest products from Olympic. Reported by Kym Hunter.

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: Mike Murray, Elizabeth Oster, Mark Forbes, Ann Rasor, Debi Cox, Maureen Finnerty, Bill Walters, Cathy Halainen

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

A Closing Observation

"Years ago, coal miners carried canaries with them into the mines to detect lethal gases. Today, our national parks are our ecological canaries."

Director George Hartzog, Battling for the National Parks, 1988

* * * * *

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 ark 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 (<u>click on this link</u>). Coalition supporters can also join and receive the newsletter (<u>click on this link</u>). If you need to contact the Coalition office on other matters, including changes of address, <u>click on this link</u>.

--- ### ---