



## The Coalition Weekly Report Wednesday, February 13, 2019

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### Incidents

#### **Yosemite NP Winter Storm Causes Serious Damage**

Park facilities and housing units and the park's ski area were all significantly impacted by the heavy snowfall the park received last week – about 18 to 24 inches between Monday and Wednesday, with more in the high country.

Impacts included toppled trees, power outages, temporary road closures, damage to park campgrounds, and the temporary closure of the park's ski area. Approximately 50 guest cabins at Half Dome Village and 50 to 70 concessioner housing units were damaged or destroyed. About 150 concession employees have been affected and arrangements are being made to provide them temporary housing.

Closures include visitor services at Half Dome Village, Upper Pines Campground (where trees fell on restrooms), and the Yosemite Ski and Snowboard Area.

The park and the park concessioner are working together on completing damage assessments, finding alternative housing for employees, and repairing damage to park facilities. No financial estimate of damage has yet been made.

Temporary road closures and delays may be possible over the next several days along Big Oak Flat Road (Highway 120 West), Wawona Road (Highway 41), and El Portal Road (Highway 140) inside the park.

Despite all the damage, the park remains open.

Source: Gina Clugston, [Sierra News Online](#).

#### **Sequoia-Kings Canyon NPs Guests At Park Lodge Snowbound For Five Days**

A major storm that began on February 1st deposited up to seven feet of snow on the area over the ensuing weekend, closing all roads in and around the park – and leaving more than 120 visitors and staff snowbound for five days in the Montecito Sequoia Lodge.

Crews reached the lodge by snowmobile on Wednesday morning and were able to assure that everyone was okay. They returned Thursday with additional supplies.

Maintenance workers had to plow eight miles of highway and clear about a score of trees before guests and staff could leave the lodge last Friday. The lodge had enough food, fuel and general supplies to keep everyone comfortable during their unexpected stay.

Source: Amanda Lee Myers, [Associated Press](#).

### **Haleakala NP Park Closed Due To...Snow**

The park was closed on Monday due to impassable snow drifts and ice on the road to the summit, plus fallen trees and rocks that have created an “extremely hazardous” situation. There are also power outages throughout the summit district.

Visitors are being encouraged to enjoy the view from down-country and not try to enter the park. Rangers are enforcing the closure at the summit district entrance at 6,500 feet.

At least six inches to a foot of snow fell at Haleakala summit on Saturday night and into Sunday. A park ranger who reached the summit reported seeing four-foot drifts.

Meanwhile, powerful gusts wreaked havoc across the state on Sunday, resulting in blown roofs, downed trees and power outages. High surf on the north and west sides of Oahu caused water to wash over roads. Winds were clocked at 191 mph on top of Mauna Kea at on Sunday afternoon.

Source: Nina Wu, [Honolulu Star-Advertiser](#).

### **Grand Teton NP Hunting Guide Pleads Guilty To Illegally Killing Wolf**

A hunting guide from Jackson Hole who shot and killed a young female gray wolf inside the park late last year has pled guilty to unlawful taking of wildlife and been sentenced to a \$5,000 fine, loss of wolf hunting privileges for a year, and a year’s probation. His wife, who was with him at the time, was not charged.

The penalties were not more significant because the guide, who said he didn’t know he was in the park, complied fully with the investigation and readily admitted his guilt. He told rangers that he was hunting along the park’s boundary and lost track of his location. Said Michael Nash, the park’s chief ranger: “The individuals were just honest and forthright about it. We didn’t detect any ill intent.”

Rangers were conducting a compliance check on two bison legally killed near the park boundary on Bridger-Teton National Forest land when they came across tracks and a blood trail telling of illegal activity north of Spread Creek.

The park’s eastern boundary where Taylor shot the wolf is “stair-stepped,” Nash said, but also well marked with signs, including where the two hunters treaded through the snow.

The wolf was shot approximately 2.5 miles west of the park’s east boundary in an area where an otherwise straight-line east-to-west boundary jogs to the south for approximately 1.5 miles. The wolf was shot approximately a half mile inside the boundary.

Rangers decided that the poaching, which occurred during the federal government shutdown, was likely accidental after conferring with the guide and his wife. The animal was checked in with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, a requirement that helped park rangers identify Taylor.

Source: Mike Koshmrl, [Jackson Hole News and Guide](#).

### **National Park System Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents**

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

- *Great Smoky Mountains NP* – Last September 7th, William Hill went into the park to hunt for ginseng, a root used for traditional home medicine that can go for as much as \$800 per pound. His body was found two days later in the woods north of Cades Cove. It had been fed upon, and a black bear nearby was acting aggressively toward rangers. After considerable thought and discussion, the park decided to destroy the bear and did so some days later. The results of an autopsy on Hill's body, recently received by the park, show that he died of "accidental methamphetamine intoxication." Although the autopsy revealed "extensive postmortem animal predation," there were no indications that he'd been attacked by a bear. Source: Kurt Repanshek, [National Parks Traveler](#).

## **Congressional Actions**

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

**NOTE:** As we were going to press (as they used to say), the Senate passed [S. 47, the Natural Resources Management Act](#), a bipartisan package that includes over 100 parks and public lands bills. Since the language of the bill has already been worked out with the House, passage there is pretty certain; it'll then go to the president for signature. See the Coalition section below for the full text of our statement on the bill, or [click here](#). There will be more coverage on the legislation in coming editions.

## **New Public Laws**

Nothing to report.

## **Senate Actions**

**February 5** – The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources adopted its rules of procedure and announced the following subcommittee assignments:

- Subcommittee on Energy – Senators Cassidy (Chair), Risch, Lee, Daines, Gardner, Hyde-Smith, McSally, Alexander, Hoeven, Heinrich, Wyden, Cantwell, Sanders, Stabenow, Hirono, King, and Cortez Masto.
- Subcommittee on National Parks – Senators Daines (Chair), Barrasso, Lee, Gardner, Hyde-Smith, Alexander, Hoeven, King, Sanders, Stabenow, Heinrich, and Hirono.
- Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining – Senators Lee (Chair), Barrasso, Risch, Daines, Cassidy, Gardner, Hyde-Smith, McSally, Hoeven, Wyden, Cantwell, Stabenow, Heinrich, Hirono, King, and Cortez Masto.
- Subcommittee on Water and Power – Senators McSally (Chair), Barrasso, Risch, Cassidy, Gardner, Alexander, Cortez Masto, Wyden, Cantwell, and Sanders.

Senators Murkowski and Manchin are ex officio members of each subcommittee.

**February 5** – Among other business, the Committee on Environment and Public Works approved:

- S. 268, to reauthorize the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and certain wildlife conservation funds, to establish prize competitions relating to the prevention of wildlife poaching and trafficking, wildlife conservation, the management of invasive species, and the protection of endangered species, to amend the Marine Turtle Conservation Act of 2004 to modify the protections provided by that Act.
- The nomination of Andrew Wheeler, of Virginia, to be administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

## **House Actions**

**February 6** – The House passed:

- H.R. 831, to direct the Secretary of Transportation to request nominations for and make determinations regarding roads to be designated under the national scenic byways program. The bill passed by a vote of 404 yeas to 19 nays.
- H.R. 66, to establish the Route 66 Centennial Commission and to direct the Secretary of Transportation to prepare a plan on the preservation needs of Route 66. The bill passed by a vote of 399 yeas to 22 nays.

**February 6** – The Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies held a hearing entitled “The Power of the Purse: A Review of Agency Spending Restrictions During a Shutdown.”. Testimony was heard from Julia Matta, managing associate general counsel, Government Accountability Office. Phil Francis, chair of the Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks, also testified at the hearing on the National Park Service’s use of fees to keep parks open during the shutdown and the resulting impacts on the parks. Phil’s testimony can be read [at this link](#); to read the related “Park Impact Survey Summary of Results,” [click on this link](#).

**February 6** – The Committee on Natural Resources held a hearing entitled “Climate Change: The Impacts and the Need to Act”. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at this hearing.

**February 7** – The Senate began debate on S. 47, the Natural Resources Management Act, a bipartisan package of over 100 parks and public lands bills from the last Congress that had been negotiated between the House and Senate, but which was not brought up for a vote by the end of the 115th Congress. Under an agreement late last year by Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer, this bill was brought up for Senate floor debate early in the 116th Congress. Many of these bills have been pending in Congress for several years. Over 60 of the sections of this 660-page omnibus bill impact individual national parks or National Park Service programs. A summary of the provisions of S. 47 can be found in the [Coalition’s weekly report of January 16th](#). During consideration of S. 47, the Senate defeated two amendments offered to the bill:

- A Grassley amendment offered on behalf of Sen. Lankford to modify the provision relating to the Land and Water Conservation Fund to impose certain requirements on the Federal acquisition of land and to require an allocation of funds for the deferred maintenance backlog. The Senate tabled the amendment by a vote of 66 yeas to 33 nays.
- A Lee amendment to modify the authorization period of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Instead of making the Land and Water Conservation Fund permanent, this amendment would have reauthorized the fund for only five years. The Senate tabled the amendment by a vote of 68 yeas to 30 nays.

The Senate will resume further debate on the bill on Monday, February 25th.

## **National Park Service**

### **National Park System**

**NPS To Pay For Shutdown Ops With Appropriated Funds** – The Service will retroactively pull money from congressionally appropriated funds to pay for the park maintenance and other operations that the Trump administration authorized during the partial government shutdown, according to an internal NPS memo obtained by *The Hill*. Deputy Director Dan Smith told staff in an emailed memo that the agency will reverse its earlier, controversial decision to use park visitor entrance fees to pay for maintenance and staffing needs under the shutdown. He said that the NPS will instead use money from the spending bill Congress approved to end the shutdown to pay for those costs. Source: Miranda Green and Timothy Cama, [The Hill](#).

### **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 Cod NS* – The deadline for submissions for proposals for the lease of the Nauset Knoll Motor Lodge has been extended until February 20th. This RFP, issued last October, provides an opportunity for interested individuals and organizations to submit proposals to the NPS to lease the property, which has historically been used as a motor lodge. However, the RFP also allows the NPS to consider different and perhaps expanded use of the property. Potential uses include, but are not limited to, municipal services, office space, an entertainment or event venue, research or educational space, a restaurant, or any combination of those services and facilities. Source: Brandon Flint, [Cape Cod NS](#).
- *Cape Hatteras NS* – A ceremony was held on February 9th to celebrate the completion of the new Oregon Inlet Bridge. The Bonner Bridge, which the new bridge replaces, was built in 1963 at a cost of \$4 million. It exceeded its intended 30-year lifespan 26 years ago, and efforts have been underway for many years to get it replaced. The new bridge, which was built at a cost of \$252 million, is designed to last for 100 years. Source: Joy Crist, [Island Free Press](#).
- *Gateway Arch NP* – The newly renovated park visitor center/museum at the Gateway Arch has been awarded LEED Gold certification in recognition of the building’s sustainable site development, water savings and building materials. The LEED rating system, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, is the nation’s most widely recognized and accepted green building rating system. The visitor center/museum join the exclusive ranks of only 10 other LEED-certified sites in the National Park Service. Source: Adrian Thompson, [interiorsandsources.com](#).
- *Grand Canyon NP* – A new study says that extending the tourist season at the North Rim by a month would boost the regional economy by \$14 million. Tourism promoters in northern Arizona and southern Utah have been advocating for an extra two weeks in both October and May. Coconino County commissioned the study, which was conducted by Northern Arizona University. Researchers say that a longer tourist season would bring nearly 38,000 visitors to a region that relies heavily on tourism and would support 183 jobs. The study doesn't factor in the cost to the national park or maintenance to the highway that leads to the North Rim. Source: [Associated Press](#).
- *Hawaii Volcanoes NP* – Geologists have confirmed and announced that the long-running eruption of Pu’u ‘O’o, a vent on the eastern flank of Kilauea, has ended. It began on January 3, 1983, and came to an end 35 years later on April 30, 2018; volcanologists delayed their announcement until they were satisfied that the eruption was truly over. “Pu’u ‘O’o kept an entire generation of scientists at work, along with tour operators, civil defense officials and — for a big, lava-spattered chunk of 2018, when Kilauea became unusually, spectacularly destructive — mainland news crews....Over the decades, the vent threw up fountains and curtains of molten orange. It spat lava bombs and cast smoke and vog — volcanic smog — across the Hawaiian island chain. What it didn’t burn it buried...” The collapse of Pu’u ‘O’o brought to an end a “stunningly long eruptive phase on one part of a mountain that still has other pipes to the Earth’s magma supply.” Source: Lawrence Downes, [Washington Post](#).
- *Jefferson Memorial* – The Service has begun a 15-month project to restore the roofs, repair the stone, and clean the marble at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial. The roof restoration and repair will consist of replacing the two flat upper and lower roofs that circle the dome to keep the building watertight and dry. Other work includes replacing the deteriorated waterproofing under the large marble tiles covering the portico, repairing the stone under the portico and along the colonnade ceilings, and improving the roof drains, downspouts and gutters. Specialized lasers will be employed to remove the black biofilm (a microbial colony of algae, fungi and bacteria) seen growing on upper portions of the memorial. The biofilm was first noticed in discrete areas of the white marble in 2006 and has become more pronounced in

recent years. The scheduled completion date is September, 2020. Source: Mike Litterst, [National Mall and Memorial Parks](#).

- *Kalaupapa NHP* – The park is seeking public comment on a revised GMP/EA for the park. The GMP/EA responds to public comments and provides broad guidance for the management of the park over the next 15 years and beyond. Under the proposal, the remaining resident-patients' lifestyle and rules would not change in the short-term. The original due date for comments was February 1st, but has been moved up to March 7th due to the government shutdown. Comments may be made at the following PEPC site. Source: [Kalaupapa NHP PEPC website](#).
- *Natchez Trace Parkway* – A state legislator in Tennessee has filed a resolution asking the National Park Service to consider adding barriers to the Natchez Trace Parkway bridge in Williamson County. The resolution addresses death by suicide from the Natchez Trace Bridge, which sits in his district. As of 2018, 32 people had died by suicide at the bridge. The structure is 155 feet high and spans Highway 96. The park has allowed the installation of call boxes and signage for suicide prevention helpline numbers, but the proposal for 32-inch railings has not yet been addressed. Source: Emily West, [Nashville Tennessean](#).
- *Zion NP* – Facilities in the Kolob Canyons District, which have been closed since roadwork began there last May, reopened on February 8th. The project involved reconstructing sections of the road, repaving the entire road, and adding accessible parking, sidewalk, and two new bathroom facilities. The intensive slope, drainage and grading portions of the project are complete and the road is now open for visitor use. Contractors will return in the spring to complete final paving and finish remaining project details, but the road will remain open during that work. Source: Eleanor Siebers, [Zion NP](#).

## **Federal Government And Congress**

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**

**Study Reveals Federal Workforce In State Of Crisis** – “A new study released by the Senior Executives Association paints a dire picture of the federal workforce, one that is stretched too thin, hampered by old technology and the target of partisan attacks,” reports *Government Executive* in a February 5th web posting. “Without a significant overhaul, agencies may fail to provide adequate services when they are needed most...” The report is entitled [Are Declines In U.S. Federal Workforce Capabilities Putting Our Government At Risk Of Failing?](#), and the authors' answer is 'yes.' One of the key problems is that there's insufficient staff to deal with increased responsibilities and a rise in overall government spending: ““The U.S. executive branch has hardly grown in 60 years—there were 1.8 million civilian employees in 1960, and 2.1 million in 2017...Yet over the same period the amount of money spent by the federal government has grown fivefold. To be sure, contracts and grants have filled part of the gap, but, still, both the amount and range of work required of the federal workforce has continued to go up, just as the scope and complexity of executive branch functions also increased.” Other problems include a 'brain drain' of upper echelon agency staff, an inadequate system for rewarding high performance coupled with “plenty of penalties” if actions don't pan out, and the expansion of the number of political appointees at federal agencies over the last half century. Source: Erich Wagner, [Government Executive](#).

### **Department of the Interior**

**DOI Allows Waivers For Firefighter/LE Mandatory Retirement** – The Department of the Interior has implemented a policy that allows bureau and office law enforcement and firefighting chiefs to waive on a case by case basis the maximum entry age and mandatory retirement age for firefighters



and law enforcement officers who are covered by the early retirement system. Until the new policy was signed on December 21st by Secretary Zinke, people in these positions were required to retire at age 57 if they had 20 years of covered service and had to begin their service no later than age 37. It is now possible for each of those requirements to be bumped up by three years to 40 and 60. "Specifically, waivers for the minimum entry age may be granted for those who do not have veterans' preference if there is a shortage of highly qualified applicants for a specific law enforcement or firefighter position, or if there is a shortage of available candidates in a geographic area," writes Bill Gabbert in *Wildfire Today*. "The mandatory retirement age could be changed to 60 in cases where the continuation of the employee's services promotes the public interest. One of the examples given was if there is a skill shortage and a qualified replacement is not readily available to replace a highly skilled incumbent who is responsible for a vital program." Source: Bill Gabbert, [Wildfire Today](#).

## **House and Senate**

**Senator Demands Assessment Of Damage To Parks During Shutdown** – Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) has called on acting Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt to provide a detailed assessment of the damage to national parks that remained open during the recent government shutdown. "The decision to keep national parks open with inadequate staffing resulted in long-term, serious damage to our public lands and national treasures," Senator Feinstein wrote. "In some cases the damage incurred during the shutdown will take centuries to recover. It is critical that Congress understand the extent and costs of the damage incurred so we may begin to make repairs where possible." [Click on this link](#) for the full text of her letter. Source: [Sierra Sun Times](#).

**Democrats Introduce Legislation To Protect National Monuments** – On February 7th, Congressional Democrats moved to protect America's national monuments from further reduction by presidential proclamation. More than 100 members of the House and Senate have signed on to bicameral legislation that declares Congress' support for 52 national monuments created between January 1996 and October 2018 by Republican and Democratic presidents under the 1906 Antiquities Act — including Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante, the two Utah monuments President Trump significantly pared down in December 2017 based on then-Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's recommendation. The bill has a killer acronym – it's called the "America's Natural Treasures of Immeasurable Quality Unite, Inspire and Together Improve the Economies of States (ANTIQUITIES) Act." It clarifies that only Congress can reduce national monuments created under the 1906 law. Source: Kellie Lunney, [Greenwire](#).

## **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:

- *Global Temps Just Keep On Climbing* – New data on global warming, released by NOAA and NASA last Wednesday, show that 2018 was the fourth-hottest year since 1880, the earliest year for which reliable global temperature data is available. Global temperatures in 2018 were 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit (0.83 degrees Celsius) warmer than the 1951 to 1980 mean, according to scientists at NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York. Globally, 2018's temperatures rank behind those of 2016, 2017 and 2015. The past five years are, collectively, the warmest years in the modern record. Source: [NASA](#).
- *Himalayan Glaciers On Pace For 'Catastrophic' Meltdown* – Our parks with glaciers aren't alone in facing a time when they will no longer exist. "While the global media's attention is on the Greenland Ice Sheet, Antarctica and the Arctic, a landmark report released this week shows that the Himalayan glaciers will face a catastrophic meltdown this century if there is no

immediate effort to reduce the world's carbon emissions,” reports *Inside Climate News*. The report, entitled [Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment: Climate Change, Sustainability and People](#), was put together by the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development. It states that – even in the best-case scenario – the Himalayan mountains will lose more than one-third of their ice by the end of the century. Himalayan peaks are warming between 0.3oC and 0.7oC faster than the global average, the report shows, and the loss of Himalayan ice would have devastating consequences for 1.6 billion people living in the mountains and downstream countries. Climate models show that summer flow in the Indus, Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers and their snow-fed tributaries will rise as the glaciers melt, but will then start decreasing as the ice disappears. Measurements show that glaciers in the Central and Eastern Himalaya are shrinking at 40 centimeters per year, and some are receding up to 30 meters per year. Source: Kunda Dixit, *Nepali Times* (via [Inside Climate News](#)).

**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:

- *House Committee Holds Hearing On Climate Change* – The House Natural Resources Committee held its first hearing on February 6th and the subject was climate change. Here are some excerpts from [the opening statement made by Rep. Raúl Grijalva, the committee's chair](#): “The majority of Americans consider meaningful action on climate change a moral imperative. They're absolutely right. And they have friends on this committee, including the chairman, who are here to work on solutions. Climate change is real. The emissions we produce from burning fossil fuels are making it worse. It's a threat to our public health, national security, infrastructure, and natural resources. We are seeing its impacts now, and they will only grow stronger unless we change course. Our communities are paying the price for years of inaction on this issue. The massive and unprecedented storms, heat waves, fires, and droughts we are experiencing are not normal. They are being made worse by climate change, and if we don't take action now, we're only at the beginning... Every day we fail to act increases the costs of addressing this crisis for future generations. Putting our heads in the sand puts peoples' lives at risk and our nation's safety in jeopardy... Today we turn the page on this committee from climate denial to climate action. Climate change is an urgent problem. It demands urgent action and a sense of purpose from Congress. This committee will offer both.” Testimony from witnesses and a video of the hearing can be seen at the following link: Source: [House Natural Resources Committee](#).
- *'Green New Deal' Resolution Introduced In Congress* – On February 7th, Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) and Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) announced the release of a resolution outlining the ideas behind a Green New Deal. Here's how *Our Daily Planet* described it: “This resolution doesn't give specifics of how to achieve its bold goals or pay for them but instead creates a starting point for conversation and negotiation with an incredibly diverse group of stakeholders ranging from vulnerable communities to academia and businesses. It focuses on jobs, infrastructure, and the role of government as a mechanism to help people and provide them with the tools to live safely and healthfully. Since a resolution is not a bill, it's not going to be debated in Congress but rather creates a roadmap for what a sustainable future in America looks like, for instance, the goal of ‘meeting 100 percent of the power demand in the United States through clean, renewable, and zero-emission energy sources’ doesn't pick winners or losers but clearly defines where we have to go as a nation.” A PDF file with [the full text of the resolution can be found at this link](#). Source: Monica Medina and Miro Korenha, [Our Daily Planet](#).
- *Westerners Show Strong Support For Conservation* – Colorado College's “State of the Rockies Project” has released the results of its ninth annual poll on public perspectives on conservation in the West. The poll shows that voters in the Mountain West “continue to support efforts to keep public lands protected and accessible, putting them at odds with the Trump administration's ‘energy dominance’ agenda.” The poll surveyed the views of voters in eight Mountain West states (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming) on policies impacting the use and protection of public lands. The role of public lands and the outdoor way of life continued to be of deep importance to Western voters. Seventy



percent said that they viewed themselves as “outdoor recreation enthusiasts” and 68 percent label themselves as “conservationists.” When asked about the Trump administration’s agenda for public lands, majorities viewed key actions over the past two years with strong disapproval. The PDF file at the following link provides details on responses to specific issues and the pollster’s methodology. Source: [Colorado College](#).

- *Michigan Governor Acts On Environmental Issues, Climate Change* – Newly-elected Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer has issued two executive orders and one executive directive to strengthen protections for the Great Lakes, clean up groundwater and drinking water, and fight climate change. She also created two new positions and a new environmental agency – a clean water public advocate, an environmental justice public advocate, and an Office of Climate and Energy – and abolished an environmental rules committee that had been created under the prior governor to give industry a process to review environmental regulations. The law creating that office had been roundly criticized by environmentalists, who dubbed it the “Fox Guarding the Hen House Act.” Source: Monica Medina and Miro Korenha, [Our Daily Planet](#).

## **National Park System Issues**

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

- *Lake Mead NRA* – The park is seeking comments on an EA for a plan it has developed to address operational needs for Lake Mead in the event that water elevation decreases below 1,050 feet. The park has been operating under a low water amendment to its GMP since 2005 because of persistent drought that has lowered the lake’s water level. A previous plan addressed management down to a lake elevation of 1,050 feet; the current elevation is 1,081 feet and BOR projections for the next 24 months suggest that the level could decline to 1,051 feet. The EA is for a second GMP amendment to guide operations down to a lake elevation of 950 feet. There are no projections that indicate the lake will drop that far – the amendment is for planning purposes. The EA provides a decision-making framework that analyzes all reasonable alternatives to meet the objectives of the proposal, evaluates potential issues and impacts to resources and values, and identifies mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts. Comments can be made at the following PEPC website until February 15th. Source: [Lake Mead NRA PEPC website](#).
- *Western Parks* – A new system has been developed to rank the [atmospheric rivers](#) (a phenomena also known in the singular as the [Pineapple Express](#)) that periodically bring intense weather and heavy precipitation to the West. Like the systems for ranking tornadoes and hurricanes, it has five levels, AR 1 (“weak, primarily beneficial”) through AR 5 (exceptionally hazardous). The ratings are meant to give communities a more precise sense of what’s ahead, particularly as these events appear to be getting more common. The federal government’s Fourth National Climate Assessment released last year warned of increasing frequency and severity of such events amid a warming climate. See the following article for a chart with all five levels of ARs. Source: Kurtis Alexander, [San Francisco Chronicle](#).

**Native Flora and Fauna** – Recent news pertaining to the management, protection, propagation and advancement of species now or formerly native to the national parks – or removal of those that aren’t native:

- *Western Maryland Parks* – Overpopulation of white-tailed deer continues to be an issue in many Eastern parks, including four parks in the western part of Maryland – C&O Canal NHP, Antietam NB, Monocacy NB and Catocin Mountain Park. The NPS will therefore use sharpshooters once again to reduce their numbers (for the first time in C&O Canal). Overabundant deer populations in the four areas are damaging vegetation and eating nearly all tree seedlings, compromising the ability of forests to sustain themselves. They’re also damaging crops that are a key component of the historic setting. Crop farming was present at the battlefields during the Civil War, and the parks’ enabling legislation mandates preservation of

these important cultural landscapes. The hunt will take place over February and March. Sharpshooters last year killed 169 deer at Antietam, 131 deer at Monocacy, and 72 deer at Catoclin. The NPS will again use qualified sharpshooters from the Department of Agriculture who will work under the direction of resource management specialists and law enforcement rangers. As in the past, deer meat will be donated to local food banks. Source: Sherry Greenfield, [Hagerstown Herald-Mail](#).

- *Pinnacles NP* – California condors, having recovered from near extinction, now have another threat to contend with – drones. Late last month, hikers reported to rangers that they saw a man “chasing condors with a drone,” apparently trying to get photos of the endangered species. The amateur photographer apparently was taking advantage of drastically reduced ranger patrols at the park during the 35-day federal government shutdown. Because of the delay in reporting and reduced staffing, rangers at Pinnacles Park were unable to find the drone operator. Source: Barry Holtzclaw, [Hollister Free Lance](#).
- *Western Parks* – The iconic monarch butterfly is in serious trouble and facing extinction throughout the West. “An alarming, precipitous drop in the western monarch butterfly population in California this winter could spell doom for the species, a scenario that biologists say could also plunge bug-eating birds and other species into similar death spirals,” reports the *San Francisco Chronicle*. “Only 28,429 of the striking orange-and-black butterflies were counted at 213 sites in California, an 86 percent drop from a year ago...” But the population drop over the last few decades has been even worse – 99.4 percent since the 1980s. “The die-off has been blamed on a variety of things, including urban sprawl, the spraying of pesticides and herbicides on corn and soybean crops, and the plowing under of the monarch’s milkweed habitat along their migratory route.” Source: Peter Fimrite, [San Francisco Chronicle](#).

**Systemic Pollution** – Issues pertaining to air, light, sound, water and other forms of pollution associated with industrial development, population growth and other sources:

- *Hawaiian Parks* – A number of bills have been introduced into the state legislature that address the problem of helicopter noise in Hawaii. Although representatives understand that the state has to defer to the FAA on control of air space, the bills reflect a growing concern with increasing helicopter noise, particularly over national parks. Example: There are about 80 round trip flights between Hilo and Hawaii Volcanoes National Park per day, both on the Big Island, which means that people on that flight path get 160 helicopters a day flying over them. The following article provides details on the bills. Source: Stephanie Salmons, [Hawaii Tribune-Herald](#).

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

- *Chaco Culture NHP* – BLM reversed course last Friday, saying that certain lands near the park would no longer be offered at an oil and gas lease sale in March. Environmental advocates, tribal groups and Democratic lawmakers had opposed the agency’s move to auction off land for oil and gas development within 10 miles of the culturally sensitive site. It is the third time the Trump administration has planned to sell parcels near Chaco Canyon and then deferred the leases. Source: Rebecca Moss, [Santa Fe New Mexican](#).

## The Coalition

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

- *Coalition Celebrates Passage of S. 47, Natural Resources Management Act* – On February 12th, CPANP issued a statement on the passage of S. 47. Here are the lead paragraphs: “The Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks is celebrating the passage of S. 47, the Natural Resources Management Act, a bipartisan package that includes over 100 parks and public lands bills. Many of these bills have been pending in Congress for several years. Coalition Chair Phil Francis says, ‘The passage of the Natural Resources Management Act is a win for national parks and public lands. We still have a long way to go in the fight to ensure our parks are fully funded and our resources are left ‘unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.’ But today, we celebrate this victory and thank our members of Congress for supporting America’s treasured natural and cultural resources.’” To read the full statement, [click on this link](#) ; to read the full text of the legislation, [click on this link](#).
- *Coalition Chair Testifies Before The House Of Representatives* – Coalition Chair Phil Francis testified last Wednesday before the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies at a hearing entitled “The Power of the Purse: A Review of Agency Spending Restrictions During a Shutdown.” He spoke on the consequences of the administration’s decision to keep parks open during the shutdown and the misuse of entrance fee revenues to do so: “In all of the collective years and experiences managing and protecting parks by members of our Coalition, we have never witnessed such an assault on the integrity of park values and the safety of visitors to the parks throughout the country. We all remember past shutdowns; however, during every previous shutdown, parks were closed, and were much less vulnerable to damage to resources or harm to visitors. This past shutdown was the perfect storm of bad decision-making for political purposes, as well as the waste of valuable funds collected and targeted for other uses. It is critical for you to assure that such an assault on our national parks never happens again. We are facing the very real possibility of another shutdown at the end of next week, and your leadership is needed to inform the administration that further damage to the parks and further harm to their dedicated federal employees will not be tolerated.” [You can read the rest of Phil’s testimony at this link](#).
- *Coalition Expresses Concern Over Bernhardt Nomination* – On February 4th, Phil Francis, CPANP’s chair, issued a statement on the nomination of David Bernhardt as Secretary of the Interior. Here’s an excerpt: “The Coalition is extremely concerned about the nomination of David Bernhardt as the new Secretary of the Interior. Secretary-designate Bernhardt was a lobbyist for oil and gas interests before assuming his position as Deputy Secretary of Interior under Ryan Zinke. As Zinke’s deputy, Bernhardt worked against environmental protection laws and demonstrated a clear bias toward the extractive industries, many of whom happened to be his former clients. We fear that Zinke’s agenda will continue not only to be pursued but expanded under Bernhardt’s reign, inflicting further harm on our national parks and National Park Service employees.” [See the full statement at this link](#)
- *Shutdown Impact Survey Released* – Coalition members recently conducted surveys of national parks across the country to observe and record impacts to these parks that could be attributed to the shutdown, using guidance provided by the Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks and the Institute for Parks, People and Biodiversity at the University of California, Berkeley. The information provided in this summary is a synopsis of the data the Coalition received. [The survey findings 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.

- *Southwest (Intermountain) Region* – On Thursday, February 3rd, Southwest Region's Resource Protection Unit (RPU) executed a search warrant at the residence of an artifact dealer and collector and seized hundreds of artifacts, many of them taken from NPS, BLM, Forest Service and Navajo tribal lands. The case began in mid-January, when RPU agent Al Delacruz and Cuyahoga Valley NP ranger Greg Cravatis contacted the dealer during an intelligence gathering trip to Indiana and Ohio by members of the unit. The dealer showed them a large collection of artifacts which he said he'd just purchased and was preparing to advertise in *Prehistoric Antiquities Quarterly*, a collectors' trade journal. Following an accelerated investigation, members of the RPU discovered that the collection had previously been owned by a Santa Fe collector who was notoriously unconcerned about the ownership of artifacts. Most, if not all, of the artifacts were from protected lands, with Park Service, BLM, Forest Service and Navajo areas prominently mentioned. On the 3rd, RPU chief Bill Tanner and RPU archeologist Judy Reed, posing as a wealthy couple, purchased the entire collection for \$150,000. In addition, Delacruz sold artifacts to the dealer, representing them as having come from federal lands. The man was then advised that he had been dealing with federal officers. Search and evidence processing teams arrived on scene shortly thereafter. They found and seized 621 prehistoric pottery vessels, about 1,000 documents and photos, and small quantities of marijuana with associated paraphernalia. The latter were turned over to the local sheriff. Many of the seized photos showed the dealer and companions digging prehistoric sites containing human burials. Based on evidence seized in Shipley's home, Delacruz and Cravatis travelled to the residence of a person who lived near Savannah, Tennessee, where they executed a second warrant and seized several more artifacts and about 1,000 additional photos and documents. Investigations have revealed the location of two other portions of the original collection - 126 pots at the College of Santa Fe and an unknown quantity at the Museum of New Mexico. Unit members transported the seized artifacts and evidence to Santa Fe, where they are working to find space to organize and study the documentary evidence and identify all of the pots. The estimated value of the artifacts has been placed at approximately \$280,000. Investigations are likely to continue for months; charges are pending. Also participating in the investigation and seizures were Cuyahoga rangers Maureen Maxey and Gary Pace and Hopewell rangers Bob Petersen and Bob Burgoon. Submitted by Bill Tanner, Chief, RPU.
- *Hawaii Volcanoes NP* – On February 1st, members of the Operation Wipeout Task Force, including park rangers, arrested two men for cultivation of marijuana on Mauna Loa just outside the park. The investigation which led to the arrests began last September, when task force members eradicated a large marijuana field on Mauna Loa and recovered a .44 caliber revolver from the area. At that time, rangers had determined that the cultivators were reaching their fields by traveling through the park. Within weeks, the operation had started up again. Rangers conducted surveillance at lookout positions and through remote videos and identified and documented two of the three suspects involved in the growing operation. Both had prior felony criminal histories. The investigation also revealed that a park fence contractor who has been missing for some time would have been in the area while active growing operations were underway, thereby making the cultivators potential suspects in his disappearance. After two days of surveillance, one of the two men was observed entering the growing area and was documented maintaining and harvesting plants. He was allowed to return into the park, then arrested. Further investigation disclosed an active indoor growing operation at his residence, and a second arrest was made at that location. The remains of a second indoor growing operations were found at an associated residence located nearby. Task force members removed 250 plants. The buds harvested in the field by the suspect who was under surveillance averaged two feet long and up to four inches in diameter. He also confessed to growing the 1500 plants which were eradicated in September. Submitted by Chief Ranger Jim Martin.
- *Channel Islands NP* – On February 3rd, a winter storm drove the boat *Susie* aground in Cuyler Harbor on San Miguel Island. The owner and a companion were rescued by rangers the following day. The owner was subsequently charged with abandoning property and polluting

park waters. Despite the 150-gallon spill, which spread into park tide pools and affected breeding elephant seals who were on the beach, the owner refused to initiate any cleanup actions and refused to take responsibility for the removal of the boat after removing valuables. He also refused to present any identification or give a home address to rangers and was combative. Since the park's experience has been that commercial fishermen are not likely to respond to a citation or appear in court, which in this case would leave the park with responsibility for the \$15,000 bill for cleaning up the beach, he was charged and arrested, then released after an initial appearance before the U.S. magistrate. Submitted by Chief Ranger Jack Fitzgerald.

## Acknowledgements

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- Production: Steve Pittleman
- Regular Correspondents: Don Hellmann, Dennis Burnett, Rick Smith, Emily Thompson, and Duncan Morrow
- Issue Contributors: Sarah Bransom, Bob Martin, Mark Forbes, Ann Rasor

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](mailto:BHalainen@gmail.com). Please don't submit them via his personal email address or Facebook page.

## A Closing Observation

"In Nature's ennobling and boundless scenes, the hateful boundary lines and the forts and flags and prejudices of nations are forgotten. Nature is universal. The supreme triumph of parks is humanity..."

[Enos Mills](#), *Your National Parks*, 1916

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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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