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**The Coalition Report**  
**Wednesday, April 5, 2023**

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***Editor note: Due to staff leave time, the next Coalition Report will be published in three weeks' time, on April 26. Thanks for your understanding.***

**Coalition Actions**

The National Parks Second Century Action Coalition, of which the Coalition is a member, released its [Fiscal Year 2024 priorities](#) for the National Park Service. These include requesting \$3.1 billion for park operations, reauthorizing the National Parks and Public Lands Legacy Restoration Fund, \$145 million for repair and maintenance of park infrastructure, a minimum of \$15 million for the Housing Improvement Program, \$20 million for the Centennial Challenge program, reauthorization of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, \$300 million for the Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects Program, and \$58 million for the National Scenic Byways Program.

The Coalition issued a [press release](#) celebrating the designation of Avi Kwa Ame and Castner Range as national monuments.

Coalition Chair Mike Murray was quoted in a *National Parks Traveler* [article](#) on a lawsuit filed by Public Employees For Environmental Responsibility, Marin Audubon Society, and the Watershed Alliance of Marin against the air tour management plans at Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Muir Woods National Monument, Point Reyes National Seashore, and San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park. In the article, Mike expressed serious concerns about the process used and noted the Coalition has commented on every plan.

The Coalition signed a [comment](#) letter prepared by the Trustees for Alaska on the January 9 proposed rule revising the regulations for hunting and trapping in national preserves in Alaska.

### **National/Regional NPS Updates**

*A summary of news pertaining to management and oversight of the NPS, to current trends and issues affecting the National Park System and its programs, or intersecting with the parks on a more regional basis.*

- *Migration corridor protection* - The White House Council on Environmental Quality issued a memorandum that tasks federal agencies with coming up with policies that take migration corridors into account in planning and decision making. They have been directed to report back to CEQ within 180 days with a plan for next steps. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Injunction on COVID vaccine mandate for federal employees* - On March 23, a federal appeals court upheld a temporary nationwide injunction on the COVID-19 vaccine mandate for federal employees. The case has undergone a series of rehearings and appeals, based on the determination of jurisdiction. This temporary injunction will hold while the case of the vaccine mandate's legality is heard in the U.S. Court for the Southern District of Texas in May 2023. That case should determine whether a permanent injunction on the mandate is enacted or not. Source: [Government Executive](#)
- *2 NPS studies on Black recreation* - On March 31 at the Organization of American Historians conference, NPS staff and partner historians presented their work from two new studies, the "African American Outdoor Recreation National Historic Landmark Theme Study" and "Segregation in Virginia Parks, 1916-1965." Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Fire retardant lawsuit* - The Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics is suing the U.S. Forest Service in Montana for failing to secure a permit under the Clean Water Act to use aerial fire retardant. The suit claims that fire retardant has negatively affected aquatic habitat and fish populations and has not been an effective tool to fight wildfires. Several groups in Northern California have filed motions to intervene to allow for the continued use of aerial fire retardant. Source: [KRCR](#)
- *Fire negligence lawsuit* - The Strawberry Water Users Association (UT) is suing the U.S. Forest Service for negligence and "trespass" for its failure to suppress the Pole Creek and Bald Mountain Fires in September 2018. Both fires were active and allowed to burn while being monitored before they dramatically grew due to high winds, eventually merging and burning for a month. Though no homes or lives were lost in the fire, private property downslope of the fires has been affected by subsequent flooding and landslides. Source: [The Salt Lake Tribune](#)

- *Harvard talk on racism in national parks* - The Ash Center at Harvard University recently hosted a panel about structural racism in national parks. Panelists included Harvard lecturer and postdoctoral research fellow, Marya T. Tshali; NPS division chief in the Office of Partnerships and Philanthropic Stewardship, Reginald Chapple; and founder and executive director of Soul Trak, Tyrhee Moore. Source: [The Harvard Gazette](#)
- *NPF partners with meditation app* - The National Park Foundation has partnered with *Headspace*, the mindfulness and meditation app, to provide national park-inspired content. Content featuring Joshua Tree, Yosemite, and Zion was published on March 27, and more are coming soon. *Headspace* also donated \$150,000 to the NPF. Source: [USA Today](#)
- *Op-ed about "car-free national parks"* - *Sierra* published [an op-ed](#) arguing for more national parks to go car-free and increase shuttle buses, trams, and biking opportunities. It examines the barriers to doing so, particularly economic factors. Source: *Sierra*

### Around the Parks

*Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.*

- *Acadia National Park* - The park has approved an increase in fee increases, which will go into effect on April 1. Source: [Acadia National Park](#)
- *Acadia National Park* - Friends of Acadia bought the Kingsleigh Inn in Southwest Harbor to be utilized as housing for 10 seasonal employees at the park. The purchase was \$1.3 million. The park has struggled to fill seasonal staff positions due to a lack of housing. The friends group has set a goal of helping the park add 130 bedrooms over the next decade. Source: [WGME](#)
- *Alaska Region* - The *Cornell Chronicle* published [an article](#) about a new Cooperative Ecosystems Study Unit agreement between Cornell University and the National Park Service that allows researchers and Native Alaskan groups to use ground-penetrating radar and artificial intelligence modeling to local unmarked burials alongside other archaeological and paleontological research. The article focuses on Pilgrim Hot Springs, where around 93 victims of Spanish flu were buried in large communal graves during the 1918-19 pandemic. Source: *Cornell Chronicle*
- *American Battlefield Protection Program* (NPS-administered program) - On March 30, the NPS awarded \$4.5 million in Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants to protect 193 acres in two battlefields in Virginia. The funding comes from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - The NPS is seeking a furnished house or

apartment to lease for one to four employees and their families within 30 miles of Nags Head. Source: [WAVY](#)

- *Chickasaw National Recreation Area* - The park has installed a fence to allow for an additional 42-acre bison pasture. After moving them to the new pasture, the current enclosure will be restored. The bison herd was first established in 1920 and the Civilian Conservation Corps constructed the original pasture, which has remained the same ever since. In the future, the bison will be rotated back and forth between the two pastures. Source: [KFOR](#)
- *Coronado National Memorial* - On April 10, the park will begin repairs to the two-mile dirt road section of Montezuma Canyon Road. The road will be temporarily closed for six days, with one half-hour pass-through window each day. Much of the road base had eroded away due to heavy use and monsoon rains the last two years. The project will include grading and adding surface material to the road. Source: [Coronado National Memorial](#)
- *Gateway National Recreation Area* - CBSK Developers, Brooklyn Bazaar, and Alder Capital received \$47.5 million in financing to revitalize the historic Jacob Riis Park bathhouse, originally built in 1932. The building has been closed since the 1990s. The developers signed a 60-year lease with the NPS in October 2022 to restore and utilize the space for lodging, food concessions, and other commercial purposes. Construction will start in the spring and a phased reopening of the space is slated for 2024. Source: [Commercial Observer](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - Guinness World Records announced that a 91-year-old has become the oldest individual to cross the Grand Canyon on foot. The record took place in 2019. It took him 5 days and he did it with a group of four friends, all in their 60s. Source: [WFTV](#)
- *Grand Teton National Park* - *WyoFile.com* published [an article](#) about "Grizzly 399," a 27-year-old female grizzly bear that lives in the park and may become the oldest surveyed grizzly in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem to bear a litter of cubs. Source: *WyoFile.com*
- *Haleakalā National Park* - On March 23, the park announced a Finding of No Significant Impact for their plan to reduce the transmission of avian malaria to threatened and endangered birds by suppressing invasive mosquito populations via the release of "incompatible male mosquitoes." This reduces the reproductive potential of female mosquitoes in the area. Source: [Haleakalā National Park](#)
- *Hampton National Historic Site* - The park recently completed a project to restore an Erard harp, one of the oldest double-action pedal harps in the United States. The harp dates to the early 1800s and is associated with the Thomas Sully painting, "Lady With a Harp." The harp had some warping due to its age, environment, and a

previous treatment. Historic Hampton, Inc., the park's partner, raised funds for the conservation treatment. The harp is now back on display in the Music Room at the site. Source: [Hampton National Historic Site](#)

- *Hopewell Culture National Historical Park - Ohio University News* published [an article](#) about David Stafford, a senior at the university who interned at Hopewell Culture in Summer 2022 and plans to apply for future NPS work. Source: *Ohio University News*
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area - LMNRA Guest Services, LLC*, has been selected to operate Cottonwood Cove Resort and Marina on Lake Mohave. They are the current operator. The new contract is expected to last 25 years, starting in January 2024. Source: [Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)
- *Lyndon B Johnson National Historical Park* - The park has opened two new temporary exhibits. "The Texas Oval Office" is a small selection of Texas White House objects and furnishings that will remain on display in the park's visitor center in Johnson City, TN while the Texas White House is restored. "The Cabinet Oak Project" is an art exhibition that utilizes wood from the branch of a 300-year-old oak of great significance to President Johnson. The artwork will be on display at the Hangar Visitor Center at LBJ Ranch from April 2 through May 31 and then will be available for auction. Source: [Lyndon B Johnson National Historical Park](#)
- *Morristown National Historical Park* - The park has received a grant from the New Jersey Society of the Cincinnati to host a new rotating photography exhibit with images by the photographer Xiomaro. The large format prints depict various parts of the park, including the "rarely seen interiors of the Cross Estate Mansion." Source: [Morristown National Historical Park](#)
- *National Capital Parks - East - DCist* published [an article](#) about efforts by a non-profit, Ward 8 Woods Conservancy, to encourage the National Park Service to develop trails and signage in the Shepherd Parkway, a 500-acre plot of forest in Congress Heights. The organization argues that the issue is one of equity and environmental justice since Ward 8 residents are 80% Black and the area has high poverty rates. The organization has removed "tens of thousands of pounds of trash," cut invasive vines, and plotted and designed a 3.8-mile trail through the area. Two Civil War forts are within the park boundaries. Concepts for trails in the Shepherd Parkway date back to the 1900s and have been included in various NPS plans over the years. Source: *DCist*
- *National Historic Landmarks Program (NPS-administered program) - Western Slope Now* published [an article](#) about Wrigley Field and its status as the only Major League Baseball stadium that is a National Historic Landmark. Source: *Western Slope Now*

- *New River Gorge National Park and Preserve* - On April 3, it was announced that 936 acres of land will be added to the park near Sandstone and Irish Mountain. The parcel will become part of the preserve part of the park to increase hunting and other recreational opportunities in the area. The Conservation Fund supported the transaction. Source: [WVNS](#)
- *North Cascades National Park* - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has confirmed that they intend to release a draft Environmental Impact Statement in June that would return grizzly bears to the North Cascades. The park's wildlife supervisor has said that the new EIS will allow for more flexibility for federal managers to adapt the program than the previous EIS, which was started in 2017 and terminated in 2020 before reaching the final stage. Source: [Yakima Herald-Republic](#)
- *Olympic National Park* - The park has instituted a reservation system for Staircase Campground during the busy season, July 5 through August 31. Reservations will be available on [Recreation.gov](#). Source: [Olympic National Park](#)
- *Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument* - On April 3, the park will begin a second phase of a road improvement project on two miles of Ajo Mountain Drive from Arch Canyon trailhead to Estes Canyon trailhead that are prone to flood damage and erosion. The first phase of the project took place in September 2022. The road will be closed through the end of April. The project is being funded by park recreation fees. Source: [Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument](#)
- *Ozark National Scenic Riverways* - The park honored the 50-year anniversary of Darrel Blackwell owning the Jadwin Canoe Rental with [an article](#) that chronicles his relationship with the park, including several summers as a ranger in the park's early days. Darrel's concession is still active. Source: [Ozark National Scenic Riverways](#)
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - An NPS survey of two of the three herds of tule elk in the park found that 2022 populations rebounded from high drought mortality from 2019-2021, ultimately increasing 13% and 19%, respectively, over 2021 populations. Source: [Marin Independent Journal](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - The park has announced a Prospectus Release for 14 contracts to provide seasonal guided horseback rides. Contracts will begin on January 1, 2024, and last for 10 years. Proposals are due June 27. Source: [Rocky Mountain National Park](#)
- *Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* - On March 25, the park completed its largest restoration project, planting over 100,000 native plants at five sites over two years. The restoration is an effort to recover riparian habitat in the wake of the November 2018 Woolsey Fire. The project involved 7,000 hours of participation from 3,000 volunteers and was funded by Snap., Inc., the Santa Monica Mountains Fund, and Re:wild. The plants were grown in the park's Rancho

- Sierra Vista native plant nursery. Source: [Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area](#)
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Yosemite National Park* - The Bloomsburg (PA) Theatre Ensemble is currently touring a program called "Park Protectors: The Story of the Buffalo Soldiers and the National Park Service" in its latest iteration of the "Theatre-in-the-Classroom" project. The troop will perform at schools across the region for two months. Source: [Times Leader](#)
  - *South Florida Natural Resources Center* (NPS-administered program) - NPS hydrologists submitted to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division a technical review of the Twin Pines mining plan, which is proposed to occur on a parcel adjacent to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. The analysis found "critical shortcomings" in the scientific modeling in the mining company's proposal, calling into question the predicted impacts on the refuge. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also submitted a letter questioning whether the project needed a full federal environmental review rather than the current state permitting process. The public comment period for the plan ended on March 20 and they are currently under review. Twin Pines has maintained that their science is correct and said they will "provide any additional information needed to eliminate doubt." Source: [The Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#)
  - *Steamtown National Historic Site* - The park has opened up Commercial Use Authorization proposals from vendors to provide mobile food services on June 17, 2023 for the park's Railfest event. Proposals are due May 10. Source: [Steamtown National Historic Site](#)
  - *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - On March 22, a federal appeals court granted the Jemez Pueblo title to a portion of Valles Caldera. The legal battle has been ongoing since 2012. A 2019 federal court had found that the U.S. government had clear title to the preserve. Following an appeal and trial, the pueblo narrowed its claim to four areas in the preserve; the recent ruling acknowledged the pueblo's title to only one of those four: Banco Bonito. It is the first time that a U.S. Tribe has successfully recovered aboriginal title that "has not been extinguished." Both the pueblo and federal government could still appeal the ruling, and it is unclear whether either will do so. Source: [Santa Fe New Mexican](#)
  - *Vicksburg National Military Park* - In mid-April, the park will begin a multi-year, multi-phase project to stabilize portions of the Vicksburg National Cemetery to address erosion caused by weather events in 2020 and 2021. \$4.7 million has been allotted for the first two phases of the project, which will temporarily relocate burials, install erosion barriers, and conduct a respectful reinternment process. Source: [Vicksburg National Military Park](#)
  - *Yellowstone National Park* - The *Casper Star-Tribune* published [an article](#) about

efforts by Yellowstone staff to start a local chapter of the National Federation of Federal Employees. In both Yellowstone and Grand Teton, maintenance employees have the option to join the local chapter of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, but other types of employees do not. The group is waiting to determine whether or not they collected enough signatures to hold an election to form a union. One of the the individuals coordinating the effort has noted that the park's turnover in seasonal staff has risen to over 75% annually and that locality pay is a significant factor. At least 84 employees have signed the petition. Source: *Casper Star-Tribune*

- *Yellowstone National Park* -The park is conducting four major road improvement projects this year:
  - The Federal Highway Administration awarded a \$118 million construction contract to HK Contractors, Inc., of Idaho Falls, ID, to replace the Yellowstone River Bridge on the Northeast Entrance Road near Tower Junction and construct one mile of road to realign properly with the new bridge. The current bridge was built in 1963. Funding for the project comes from the Great American Outdoors Act. Construction is expected to begin this summer and completed in Fall 2026. Traffic will remain open during construction with occasional delays.
  - The Lewis River Bridge will be replaced and additional parking and viewing opportunities will be added. The project will start this summer and end in Fall 2024. Delays are expected and nearby pullouts and the trail to Lewis River Falls will be closed during construction. The \$31 million project is being funded through the Great American Outdoors Act.
  - 22 miles of the Grand Loop Road between Old Faithful and West Thumb will be rehabilitated. The road has deteriorated from use and winter weather. It will be repaved and guardrails, culverts, and other drainage structures will be added. The project will begin this summer and end in Fall 2023. Delays are expected. The \$43 million project is being funded through the Great American Outdoors Act
  - Various flood recovery measures will take place between Lamar Canyon and the Northeast Entrance, including a realignment in Lamar Canyon, stabilization of streambanks, work in the Pebble Creek Campground and Warm Creek Picnic Area, new paving, and improved drainage structures and guardrails. Work will begin this summer and end in Fall 2023. Delays are expected. The \$25 million project is being funded by the Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads Fund
  - Source: Yellowstone National Park ([3/23](#), [3/27](#))

### **Personnel Changes**

- *Appomattox Court House National Historical Park, Booker T Washington National Monument* - James "Jim" Baily has been selected as the new superintendent for the two parks. Jim has over 22 years of NPS experience, most recently as the chief of interpretation, resource education and visitor services at Manassas National



Battlefield Park. Jim will start his new role this spring. Source: [Appomattox Court House National Historical Park](#)

- *U.S. Park Police* - Jessica Taylor has been selected as the new Chief of Police. Jessica has over 25 years of federal law enforcement experience, including time with the U.S. Secret Service, Department of Agriculture's Office of the Inspector General, and the Environmental Protection Agency. Jessica will start her new role in early May. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)

## **Park People**

*Here we honor deceased park employees, as well as important news about Coalition Members and other former park employees or volunteers. People are listed alphabetically by last name.*

### **Deceased**

- Robert "Bob" O. Fournier, 91, passed away in January. Bob was a geologist for the U.S. Geologic Survey for many years, including several decades of research on geothermal features at Yellowstone National Park. Source: [U.S. Geological Survey](#)
- L. Pierce Loberg, 87, passed away on March 2. He worked for the NPS in Yosemite National Park for a time, as well as for Hedahl Construction as the engineer supervisor on the construction of several buildings in Yosemite. He was a long-time resident of Wawona and also delivered mail in his retirement to Yosemite Valley and Yosemite West. Source: [Mariposa Gazette](#)
- Donald "Don" David Utterback, 84, passed away on March 22. Don worked for the NPS for many years, including stints at Grand Canyon National Park, Yosemite National Park, Ozark National Scenic Riverways, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, and Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Source: [Dignity Memorial](#)

### **Retired**

- Cynthia McLeod, superintendent of Independence National Historical Park, Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site, Gloria Dei Church National Historic Site, and Thaddeus Kosciuszko National Memorial, retired on April 3. Cynthia worked for the NPS for over 42 years, including 15 years at the helm of those four parks, 18 years as the superintendent of Richmond National Battlefield Park and Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site, and stints at Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Northeast Region, and Point Reyes National Seashore. She also earned her certificate in the Senior Executive Service. Source: [Independence National Historical Park](#)

### **In the News**

- Stephen Trimble will be presenting at the Trails Foundation of Utah's 2023 Author Dinner on May 5. Stephen was a ranger at Capitol Reef National Park for a time,

has published 25 books, and has been honored as one of Utah's "15 most influential artists" and as the recipient of the Ansel Adams Award for photography and conservation from the Sierra Club. Source: [Standard-Examiner](#)

### **Open for Comment**

*Items will stay on this list until public comment has closed.*

- *Amache National Historic Site* - Public comment is [open until June 23](#) on a foundation document to guide the new national park unit. Source: [Amache National Historic Site](#)
- *Bandelier National Monument* - Public comment is [open until April 24](#) on proposed increases to campground fees at Juniper and Ponderosa Campgrounds. Source: [Bandelier National Monument](#)
- *Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area* - The Bureau of Land Management has [opened public comment until April 14](#) on a Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range Joint Herd Management Area Plan. The area is managed by three agencies: the BLM, U.S. Forest Service, and National Park Service. Source: [The Wildlife News](#), [Bureau of Land Management](#)
- *Dry Tortugas National Park* - Public comment is [open until April 10](#) on a plan to repair the Fort Jefferson counterscarp and dredge the moat. The counterscarp was damaged by Hurricanes Irma and Ian. Construction funds for the project have been allocated through Public Law 115-123 for hurricane recovery. Source: [Dry Tortugas National Park](#)
- *Everglades National Park* - The NPS and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, have [opened public comment through April 27](#) on a plan to replace failing seawall bulkheads, boat ramps, walkways, and aging amenities at Flamingo Marina. Source: [Everglades National Park](#)
- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Grand Canyon National Park* - The Bureau of Reclamation has opened public comment on [a draft environmental assessment](#) for flow strategies to mitigate the threat of smallmouth bass on ecosystems below Glen Canyon Dam. Comments can be sent in via email. Source: [St. George News](#)
- *Joshua Tree National Park* - The California State Parks Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division has [opened public comment through May 1](#) for 2023 restoration grant applications. Joshua Tree has prepared an application requesting funds to mitigate illegal off-road driving activities in the park, including monitoring, law enforcement patrols, educational products, and fencing. Source: [Joshua Tree National Park](#)
- *Katmai National Park and Preserve* - Public comment is open until April 28 on a seasonal Brooks River Corridor permit system, which was first piloted in 2022 and

- will again be utilized in 2023. Source: [Katmai National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument* - Public comment is [open until June 30](#) on a draft Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment that will guide park operations and planning. Source: [Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument](#)
  - *Mesa Verde National Park* - Public comment is [open until April 10](#) on a plan to stabilize the Spruce Tree House alcove arch. Spruce Tree House has been closed since October 2015 and has undergone previous arch stabilization treatments in 1962 which are starting to fail. Source: [The Journal](#)
  - *Minidoka National Historic Site* - The Bureau of Land Management has [extended public comment until April 20](#) on their draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Lava Ridge Wind Project, which is located adjacent to Minidoka and within the historic footprint of the camp. [See the [Coalition's stance on the project](#).] Source: [Northwest Asian Weekly](#)
  - *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - Public comment is [open until April 14](#) on the design for the Global War on Terrorism Memorial, to be located within the Reserve in Washington, D.C. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
  - *Pipestone National Monument* - Public comment is [open until May 3](#) on a pedestrian access trail plan. Source: [Pipestone National Monument](#)
  - *Sitka National Historical Park* - Public comment is [open until April 9](#) on proposed changes to the park's Compendium. Source: [Sitka National Historical Park](#)
  - *Voyageurs National Park* - Public comment is [open until May 3](#) on a Frozen Lake Surface Access and Use Plan, which pertains to the plowing of "ice roads" for non-snowmobile vehicles. Source: [Voyageurs National Park](#)

### **Other Department of the Interior News**

- *BLM proposes rule to focus on conservation* - On March 30, the Bureau of Land Management proposed a rule that would designate conservation as a formal use alongside energy development, grazing, and recreation, including the establishment of private conservation leases by restoration groups and better scientific monitoring of land condition. The proposal will be open for public comment later this week. Source: [E&E News](#)
- *Legislative efforts to delist grizzlies* - There are two bills in Congress currently to remove grizzly bears from the endangered species list in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has said that the bill circumvents the scientific processes and

public participation prescribed by the Endangered Species Act and Administrative Procedures Act. Proponents of the legislation argue that the scientific methods being used are flawed and are not adequately giving livestock enough protection from growing populations. Source: [Billings Gazette](#)

- *DOI at U.N. Water Conference* - On March 22, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland represented the United States at the United Nations 2023 Water Conference, emphasizing the role of collaborative conservation as a key strategy in advancing climate change resilience and reliable water, particularly for underserved populations. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$353 million for Gulf coastal restoration* - On March 30, the Department of the Interior announced \$353 million in 2022 energy revenue to be disbursed for coastal conservation and restoration projects, hurricane protection programs, onshore infrastructure projects, and coastal resilience planning in four offshore Gulf oil and gas producing states. The funds were established by the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 and this is the largest disbursement to date. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$16 million for co-stewardship and salmon conservation* - On March 31, the Department of the Interior announced it will invest \$16 million over the next four years in its Gravel to Gravel initiative to restore salmon habitats and populations in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Rivers and Norton Sound Watershed, in partnership with Alaska Native communities. Funding is supported by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *South Fork Wind project approved* - On April 3, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement completed its review of design and installation reports for the South Fork Wind project to allow turbine construction offshore of Rhode Island and New York. It is the first commercial-scale offshore wind energy project to start construction in federal waters. Construction is expected to be completed in Summer 2023. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

### **Congressional Actions**

*Reports on legislation, upcoming hearings, and new public laws of relevance to the national parks, prepared by Don Hellmann, former assistant director of legislative and congressional affairs for the National Park Service, and Chris Soller, former superintendent of Fire Island National Seashore and legislative specialist for the National Park Service.*

### **Senate Actions**

**March 23** – The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources announced the following subcommittee assignments for the 118th Congress:

- Subcommittee on Energy: Senators Bernie Sanders (I-VT, Chair), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Angus King (I-ME), Catherine

Cortez Masto (D-NV), John Hickenlooper (D-CO), Josh Hawley (R-MO), James Risch (R-ID), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), John Hoeven (R-ND), Bill Cassidy (R-LA), and Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS).

- Subcommittee on National Parks: Senators King (Chair), Sanders, Heinrich, Hirono, Mark Kelly (D-AZ), Steve Daines (R-MT), Mike Lee (R-UT), Murkowski, and Hyde-Smith.
- Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining: Senators Cortez Masto (Chair), Wyden, Heinrich, Hirono, King, Kelly, Hickenlooper, Lee, Risch, Daines, Murkowski, Cassidy, and Hawley.
- Subcommittee on Water and Power: Senators Wyden (Chair), Sanders, Cortez Masto, Kelly, Hickenlooper, Risch, Lee, Hoeven, and Cassidy.

Senators Joe Manchin (D-WV) and John Barrasso (R-WY) are *ex-officio* members of all subcommittees.

**March 28** – The Senate agreed to S. Res. 129, designating March 2023 as "National Women's History Month."

**March 29** – The Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies concluded a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for Fiscal Year 2024 for the Department of the Interior after receiving testimony from Deb Haaland, Secretary of the Interior.

**March 30** – The Senate agreed to S. Res. 148, recognizing the heritage, culture, and contributions of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian women in the United States.

### **House Actions**

**March 23** – The Committee on the Budget held a hearing entitled "The President's Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Request." Testimony was heard from Shalanda D. Young, Director, Office of Management and Budget.

**March 23** – The Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries held a hearing on:

- H.R. 764, to require the Secretary of the Interior to reissue regulations removing the gray wolf from the list of endangered and threatened wildlife under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.
- H.R. 886, to amend the Save Our Seas 2.0 Act to improve the administration of the Marine Debris Foundation, and to amend the Marine Debris Act to improve the administration of the Marine Debris Program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.
- H.R. 1245, to direct the Secretary of the Interior to reissue a final rule relating to removing the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem population of grizzly bears from the federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife, and for other purposes.

- H.R. 1419, to direct the Secretary of the Interior to issue a new rule removing the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem population of grizzly bears from the federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife.

Testimony was heard from Steven Guertin, Deputy Director for Policy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior; Nancy Wallace, Marine Debris Program Director, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce; Brian Nesvik, Director, Wyoming Game and Fish Department; and public witnesses.

**March 23** – The Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing on several bills, including the following:

- H.R. 1567, to require that the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior submit accurate reports regarding hazardous fuels reduction activities, and for other purposes.
- H.R. 1586, to allow the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture to use a fire retardant, chemical, or water for fire suppression, control, or prevention activities.

Testimony was heard from Chris French, Deputy Chief for National Forest Systems, U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture; and public witnesses.

**March 28** – The Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies held a budget hearing on the Department of the Interior. Testimony was heard from the following Department of the Interior officials: Deb Haaland, Secretary; Joan M. Mooney, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary; and Denise Flanagan, Director of Budget.

**March 28** – The Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing on several bills including the following:

- H.R. 1319, to require the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to develop long-distance bike trails on federal land.
- H.R. 1380, to require the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to issue guidance on climbing management in designated wilderness areas.
- H.R. 1527, to improve access for outdoor recreation through the use of special recreation permits on federal recreational lands and waters.
- H.R. 1576, to provide exceptions from permitting and fee requirements for content creation, regardless of distribution platform, including still photography, digital or analog video, and digital or analog audio recording activities, conducted on land under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior.
- H.R. 1642, to amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to provide for an annual National Recreational Pass for law enforcement officers and firefighters.

Testimony was heard from Representative Moore of Utah; Chris French, Deputy Chief for National Forest Systems, U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture; Mike Mills, Secretary, Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, Arkansas; Mike Reynolds, Deputy

Director, External and Congressional Affairs, National Park Service, Department of the Interior; and public witnesses.

**March 29** – The Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies held a budget hearing on the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service. Testimony was heard from the following Department of the Interior officials: Tracy Stone-Manning, Director, Bureau of Land Management; Martha Williams, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and Charles F. Sams III, Director, National Park Service.

**March 30** – The House passed H.R. 1, to lower energy costs by increasing American energy production, exports, infrastructure, and critical minerals processing; by promoting transparency, accountability, permitting, and production of American resources; and by improving water quality certification and energy projects, by a ye-a-and-nay vote of 225 yeas to 204 nays.

While the final text of the bill with all the adopted amendments was unavailable at press time, one amendment by Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez (D-NM) was passed that requires each local unit of the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and U.S. Forest Service to develop a plan to disseminate and advertise open civil service positions with functions relating to permitting and natural resources in their offices. Each plan is required to include outreach to local high schools, community colleges, institutions of higher education, and any other relevant institutions. The amendment passed by a vote of 323 ayes to 109 noes.

**March 30** – Read a letter from the Speaker wherein he designated the period from Friday, March 31, 2023, through Sunday, April 16, 2023, as a "district work period" under section 3(z) of House Resolution 5.

## **Incidents**

*Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.*

### **Cape Lookout National Seashore Heavy buoys removed from beach**

On March 21, the NPS and U.S. Coast Guard removed five 1,300-pound buoys from the beaches of the seashore. One buoy had washed ashore during Hurricane Florence in 2018 and the others had washed up in subsequent storms. A Coast Guard helicopter was able to lift them from the beach. Source: [Cape Lookout National Seashore Facebook page](#)

### **César E. Chávez National Monument Flooding**

The park has closed several times in recent weeks due to record rainfall that has flooded the road into the park. Kern County Fire and NPS personnel have been working to clear

the water. The park was able to safely celebrate César Chávez Day on March 31. Source: [Bakersfield Now](#), [César E. Chávez National Monument Facebook page](#)

### **Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park** **Potentially rabid raccoons**

On March 21, the park announced that it had received reports of several raccoons behaving abnormally near Lock 34 (mile 61.5). The behaviors may be a sign of rabies. They have warned visitors to be cautious and to report any sick or abnormally behaving wildlife. Source: [Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park](#)

### **Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park** **Fire**

On March 26 at 2 am, a fire started in the Wright Company Factory. Dayton Fire Department crews worked for two days to stop and control the blaze. The cause of the fire is under investigation by the Dayton Fire Department Fire Investigation Unit. The historic building is part of the "legislative boundary" of the park and is owned by the City of Dayton. It was the first factory in the U.S. designed for building airplanes. Source: [Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park](#)

### **Death Valley National Park** **Missing person self-rescues**

On March 24, a group of people hiked into the salt flats of Badwater Basin to photograph stars. A 61-year-old left the group to get something from a vehicle in the parking lot. However, the individual did not return. After conducting a search, the other members of the party drove to Furnace Creek and called 911. NPS staff turned on bright flashing lights and searched on foot, starting around 2:30 am. More NPS staff and a California Highway Patrol helicopter were called to assist with the search. The individual had gotten disoriented in the darkness. When they realized they couldn't see the road or other landmarks, they stayed in one place until daybreak. They were then able to see the road and hike to it, then hitchhiked to the Badwater parking lot, arriving around 8:20 am. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)

### **Delaware Gap National Recreation Area** **Vandalism**

Graffiti was discovered on the historic Brooks Woolen Mill ruins and the original 1892 date stone at George W. Childs Park. Names were included in the graffiti, as well as the date: March 21, 2023. Public tips allowed law enforcement to identify suspects, who have been located, and charges are pending. Childs Park has been closed for restoration and improvements since 2018, though the entrance stone is visible from the road. The park is working to delicately remove the graffiti while protecting the historic resources. Source: [Pocono Record](#), [Delaware Gap National Recreation Area](#)



## **Fort Raleigh National Historic Site**

### **Several crimes**

The park is seeking assistance from the public for three recent incidents: 1) Vandalism and an attempted theft in Waterside Theatre on March 24. 2) Theft of an NPS arrowhead from the entrance on March 13. 3) An attempted break-in that was thwarted due to activation of an alarm system on February 27. Source: [Fort Raleigh National Historic Site](#)

## **Grand Canyon National Park**

### **Rockfall**

Due to ongoing storms, three sizeable rockfalls have been reported along the Bright Angel Trail. The trail is still passable, though the park has asked the public to remain aware that more rockfall may be possible in the canyon as snow melts in coming weeks. Source: [KNAU](#)

## **Great Smoky Mountains National Park**

### **Storm closes roads**

On April 1, storms and high winds felled several trees, requiring the closure of U.S. Highway 441/Newfound Gap Road and Little River Road between Metcalf Bottoms and Townsend Wye. Both roads were able to reopen by April 2. Source: [Knox News](#), [Great Smoky Mountains National Park Twitter Road Info](#)

## **Great Smoky Mountains National Park**

### **Wildfire**

On April 1, a fire ignited near Old Walland Highway and Foothills Parkway, outside the park. Blount County Fire Protection District and Townsend Area Volunteer Fire Department crews responded, with support from Tennessee Division of Forestry and the NPS. Embers from the fire jumped over Old Walland Highway and "into Great Smoky Mountains National Park territory near a new section of Foothills Parkway." By April 3, the fire was 100% contained at between 20 and 50 acres. The cause of the fire is currently unknown. Source: [The Daily Times](#)

## **Mojave National Preserve**

### **Train derailment**

On March 27, a freight train with 55 rail cars and two locomotives derailed near Kelso Depot. The train was carrying iron ore, which spilled from the cars. The ore is not a hazardous material. No crew was injured in the accident. One locomotive had a minor fuel leak, and the San Bernardino County Fire Protection District said there is "no current threat to public or environment." Crews repaired the tracks and train traffic resumed on March 28. A Union Pacific spokesperson said the incident's cause is still under

investigation. It is the third train derailment nationwide this month (including one just outside New River Gorge National Park and Preserve, reported in the [3/22/23 Coalition Report](#)). Source: *Las Vegas Review-Journal* ([3/27](#), [3/28](#))

### **Rock Creek Park**

#### **Fire**

On March 22, a fire was reported on the north slope of Piney Branch Parkway near Beach Drive NW. U.S. Park Police closed Piney Branch at 17th Street and at Beach Drive. DC Fire contained and extinguished the fire at 2 acres. No personal property was damaged. The cause of the fire has not yet been determined. Source: [Rock Creek Park](#)

### **Shenandoah National Park**

#### **Wildfire**

On March 23, a wildfire started in the Big Meadows area. 25 wildfire personnel from the NPS and U.S. Forest Service responded and were able to contain the fire at just over 13 acres. Several Big Meadows trails and Rapidan Road were closed while crews conducted operations. The power was temporarily turned off in the area and was restored on March 24, in time for the Big Meadows facility season opening. Big Meadows Wayside, Campground, and Picnic Grounds, as well as the Lewis Mountain area are all now open. Source: [Shenandoah National Park](#), [WRIC](#)

### **Sitka National Historical Park**

#### **Avian flu**

On March 12, the Alaska Raptor Center collected a grounded adult bald eagle from the park that was displaying head jerks and neck twist. Test results confirmed that the eagle had highly pathogenic avian influenza. Visitors have been advised to not approach or touch any birds that appear sick and keep dogs on close watch. Park staff are working with partners to monitor the park's birds and collect, test, and properly dispose of as many dead birds as possible to prevent further transmission. Source: [Sitka National Historical Park](#)

### **Tuzigoot National Monument**

#### **Wildfire**

On April 2, a wildfire began in the Tavasci Marsh Area. An interagency Type Two team and Verde Valley Fire are confining and containing the fire. As of April 3, the Tuzigoot Fire was 100 acres in size. All trail access leading into the marsh area are currently closed to the public. Source: [Tuzigoot National Monument](#)

### **Zion National Park**

#### **Storm damage**

On March 15, the park announced the closure of Kolob Canyons Road beyond the visitor center due to storm-induced rockfall. On March 21, electrical service to Zion Lodge was interrupted due to damage to buried electrical lines. It was restored on March 22. On March 23, temporary closures and delays on Zion Canyon Scenic Drive were enacted, also due to storm and rockfall damage. Repairs to roads and sewers are ongoing. It is unclear when Kolob Canyons Road will reopen. Source: [KSL.com](#), [Zion National Park](#)

### **Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents**

- *Fire Island National Seashore* - The park has announced the next phase of the ongoing lighthouse tower façade repair: the removal of two exterior panels and associated brick rubble near the base of the lighthouse terrace. The terrace north of the Keeper's Quarters and adjacent boardwalks will remain closed during the work, which will last several weeks. The lighthouse tower has been closed since March 4, when a large panel on the structure separated (see [3/8/23 Coalition Report](#)). There is no estimated date for reopening the lighthouse yet. Source: [Fire Island National Seashore](#)
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - Clark County (NV) coroners were able to use DNA analysis and historical records to identify human remains that were discovered in Calville Bay in October 2022 by a concession dive operator (see [11/22/22 Coalition Report](#)). The individual was a 39-year-old who accidentally drowned in April 1974. Source: [The Guardian](#)
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - On March 25, the park shared an overview of storm damage from the most recent round of atmospheric river events. Though damage assessments are ongoing, the park has identified 20 areas of significant damage along Generals Highway, many of which will require contracted highway construction crews. Mineral King Road also sustained significant damage. Caltrans also reported major road damage on sections of Highway 180 leading into Cedar Grove. Grant Grove has an estimated reopening date of April 14. The foothills area below Hospital Rock is estimated to reopen between April 7-14. Giant Forest is estimated to reopen in late May to mid-June via the Highway 180 entrance, with the Highway 198 access estimated in June. There is no estimated opening date yet for Cedar Grove, Crystal Cave, or Mineral King. Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#)
- *U.S. Park Police* - On April 4, the USPP released body cam footage from the March 18, 2023 incident that involved an officer shooting (see [3/22/23 Coalition Report](#)). The incident is still under investigation. The video includes graphic content and strong language and viewer discretion is advised. Source: [U.S. Park Police](#)

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- Regular Correspondent: Don Hellmann, Chris Soller
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If you see something that might be of interest to Coalition members, send it to [report@protectnps.org](mailto:report@protectnps.org).

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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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