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The Coalition Report

Wednesday, February 8, 2023

Coalition Actions

If you haven't had a chance to fill out our Coalition membership satisfaction [survey](#), please do! It only takes a minute, and it helps us understand how we can better serve you.

The Coalition [published a report](#) called *Action Needed to Protect National Parks from Oil and Gas Development*. It highlights the impacts of oil and gas development near Carlsbad Caverns National Park, Chaco Culture National Historical Park, Rocky Mountain National Park, and Grand Teton National Park. It also urges the Biden administration and Congress to take action to curb the adverse effects of energy extraction on our parks, public lands, and communities.

Please consider [joining us in a letter](#) to the Biden administration to finalize and fully implement much-needed reforms to the current oil and gas leasing system.

We submitted comments on preliminary visitor access management plans for [Yosemite National Park](#), [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#), and [Rocky Mountain National Park](#).

The Coalition joined with 40 organizations on [comments](#) to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration regarding their intent to draft a management plan for the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument. Recommendations include requiring an inventory of the monument's resources; a scientific monitoring, exploration, and research plan; a public education

program; a permitting program for permissible activities; and a specified timeframe to review and update the plan.

We submitted [comments](#) on the NPS National Long Range Transportation Plan. Among other things, the comments included general support and need for a plan, the recommendation that the plan protect cultural and natural resources, flexibility for individual units to meet their funding and transportation needs, and engagement with local leaders to comprehensively address the needs at individual units.

The Coalition joined in submitting [comments](#) to the Wyoming Bureau of Land Management expressing concerns about proposed second quarter oil and gas lease sales prior to correcting structural deficiencies in the program.

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.

- *2023 agenda for NPS* - On February 1, the NPS issued a press release with an overview of what's ahead for the agency in 2023, including infrastructure projects, fire mitigation, climate resilience, workforce efforts, strengthening Tribal involvement, and funding for untold stories. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Backlog on NPS studies for potential sites* - *E&E News* published [an article](#) about the backlog of potential NPS sites awaiting study. The article documents several studies that have been ordered by Congress and are now years overdue. One source said the backlog stems from the Solicitor's Office, though the NPS would not comment on the cause of the backlog. There are at least 28 studies that have been ordered by Congress for potential new national parks, heritage areas, trails, or wild and scenic rivers. Source: *E&E News*
- *James K. Polk resource study* - On February 6, the NPS submitted to Congress the James K. Polk Presidential Home Special Resource Study, which found that the former president's Columbia, Tennessee residence meets three of four criteria for potential inclusion in the National Park System. Typically, sites that do not meet all four criteria are not eligible for inclusion. They found the Polk home is currently adequately managed by its memorial association with support from the state, and may be a good candidate for other NPS designation and recognition programs. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Zinke on DOI subcommittee* - On January 27, former Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, now a U.S. Representative (R-MT), was appointed to the Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee (see more in "Congressional Actions" below).

Source: [E&E News](#)

- *Women and Girls in Science* - February 11 is International Women and Girls in Science Day. To celebrate, the NPS created [a webpage](#) to share stories of many of the agency's female scientists. Source: *The Green & Gray Report*, Volume VI, Issue 23
- "A 1923 National Park Road Trip" - On February 1, Harpers Ferry Center published an interpretive story map called "Keeping Up with the Johnsons" that chronicles a road trip across the U.S. by Pete and Flo Johnson in 1923. It allows readers to better understand the historical context of the early years of the National Park Service and motor touring. Source: [NPS History Collection](#)
- *Protecting migratory corridors* - *National Parks Traveler* published [an article](#) about efforts to protect wildlife migratory corridors in the face of large-scale declines to mammal and avian populations. Source: *National Parks Traveler*
- "Get rid of bottlenecks - not environmental reviews" - [An op-ed](#) by this name, written by Jamie Pleune, an Associate Professor of Law at the University of Utah, was published in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. The op-ed cites a study of over 41,000 U.S. Forest Service projects that required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) reviews and found that analytical rigor and public participation did not create the majority of delays. Rather, agency capacity, permittee communications, and compliance related to non-NEPA laws were responsible. A separate study on mineral mine permitting showed similar reasons for delays, as well as poor interagency coordination. The op-ed suggested that efforts to eliminate or streamline environmental review are misguided, and that Congress should instead increase agency staffing and training capacity. Source: *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*
- "The best national parks" according to those who have visited them - YouGov conducted a poll in 2022, asking Americans about their experiences with U.S. national parks, including which parks they would recommend to others. The top five were Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Hawai'i Volcanoes, Great Smoky Mountains, and Rocky Mountain. (The study appears to have only included "national parks" in name, not all units of the National Park System.) Source: [YouGov America](#)

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Acadia National Park* - A park contractor is doing repaving and culvert replacement work on Cadillac Summit Road and Park Loop Road this spring. Cadillac Summit Road will be closed to all uses from approximately February 28 through May 10. The Park Loop Road will remain open, though there may be single lane closures. Source: [Acadia National Park](#)

- *Big Bend National Park* - On February 6, an assessment was published in the Federal Register that found that 63,505 acres from a 1987 land donation to the park in the North Rosillos area are eligible for official wilderness designation. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Big Cypress National Preserve, Everglades National Park* - Interior Secretary Deb Haaland and Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks Shannon Estenoz visited both parks to highlight the Department of the Interior's efforts to protect and restore natural resources in the Everglades and to make upgrades to park infrastructure. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area* - The park has begun an upgrade to the wastewater system at the Blue Heron Mine area. The system was damaged by flooding in the 1990s and temporary fixes have begun to fail. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Nashville District is overseeing the project through the Interagency and International Services program. Source: [Defense Visual Information Distribution Service](#)
- *Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail* - On January 25, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and Pennsylvania Organization for Waterways and Rivers announced that the North Branch of the Susquehanna River has been selected as Pennsylvania's 2023 "River of the Year," as chosen by public vote. The North Branch is a "water trail" segment of the Captain John Smith trail network. Source: [Pennsylvania Pressroom, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources](#)
- *Castillo de San Marcos National Monument* - A group of University of Central Florida researchers is collaborating with the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, the NPS, the Florida National Guard, and Flagler College to replace two grave markers that currently say, "Six Unknown Indians" at St. Augustine National Cemetery. After several years meticulously researching who was interred there, the grave markers will be replaced with headstones with the names of 10 leaders from the Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Comanche Tribes who were known to be imprisoned and died in captivity at Fort Marion during the Plains Wars of the mid-1800s. A ceremony to honor those individuals was held on November 17, 2022. The park will also soon be changing exhibits in the park about the incarceration of these individuals to better include Native perspectives. Source: [UCF Today](#)
- *Chaco Culture National Historical Park* - On February 1, the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals sided with the Western Environmental Law Center that the Bureau of Land Management violated the law by not accounting for the effects of air pollution on nearby communities from oil and gas drilling leases on lands near the park. Source: [The Journal](#)

- *Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area* - The park has issued requests for proposals for two historic properties. Cliff Park Inn and Gold Course is up for a lease term of up to 60 years of the hotel, golf course, restaurant, and associated outbuildings on 50 acres. Dingmans Dutch Reformed Church is up for a lease term of 10 years, and includes a church building currently used as a residence and a carriage house that is currently used as an antiques store, and may be used for commercial or storage purposes. Proposals for both are due by March 25. Source: [Delaware Gap National Recreation Area](#)
- *Everglades National Park* - On January 26, the NPS and South Florida Water Management District broke ground on the Taylor Slough Flow Improvement Project, which aims to allow more clean water to flow through the slough to the bay to support ecosystem function. The project is working at nine locations along Old Ingraham Highway. It is expected to be completed in Summer 2023. Source: [WFTX](#)
- *George Washington Parkway* - The parkway is undergoing a \$161 million rehabilitation project on its northern section. In addition to laying fresh asphalt, stone walls will be rebuilt, erosion will be fixed, safety barriers will be installed, scenic overlooks will be upgraded, and viewsheds will be restored. Parts of the route will be redesigned. Construction and reversible lane changes along the route are expected to continue from March through the end of 2025. Source: [Axios Washington D.C.](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - On January 28, *The Hallmark Channel* released a new movie called "Love in Glacier National: A National Park Romance." It was filmed in Fernie, British Columbia. It is supposedly set in the park, though it is unclear whether any of the references to the park are based on real-life attributes. Source: [heavy](#)
- *Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve* - On February 3, the NPS signed a Finding of No Significant Impact for the park's marine management plan. Source: [Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - Numerous media outlets reported recently on the state of the Colorado River.
 - *The New York Times* published [an article](#) about the January 31 deadline imposed by the Department of the Interior for a consensus on water supply cuts among the seven states dependent on the river and what might happen if no consensus was reached.
 - On January 31, six states reached a modest agreement that would have required major cuts by California, which is the largest user. Meanwhile, California submitted its own proposal for cuts. It is unclear what the Bureau of Reclamation will decide next. Source: [The Washington Post](#)
 - The *Las Vegas Review-Journal* published [an article](#) about the effects of recent snowpack on forecasted water levels. Federal projections show Lake Mead seven feet higher than previously predicted at the end of 2023 (though

still 19 feet lower than current levels), and Lake Powell 16 feet higher (and 19 feet higher than current levels).

- The *Los Angeles Times* published [a 4-part series](#) and podcast about the "crisis," including a historical look at the politics and climate of the region and the challenges to fixing it.
- *E&E News* published [an article](#) about the possibility of Lake Powell hitting "deadpool" levels (where no water flows below the dam).

- *Grand Canyon National Park* - Superintendent Ed Keable and Grand Canyon Conservancy CEO Theresa McMullan held an online forum called "Insights and Impacts," in which Ed talked about the effects of climate change on the park, particularly challenges for native fish populations and water policy. He also talked about housing shortages in the park and how they are affecting their ability to fill positions. Theresa talked about the installation of dark sky compliant lighting fixtures around the park. Source: [Williams-Grand Canyon News](#)

- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - The park will close the Greenbrier Road at U.S. 321 from February 13 until March 31 to repair road damage and replace washed out culverts caused by storms in July 2022. The Federal Highway Administration awarded the \$410,000 contract to Bryant's Land Development Industries, Inc. out of Burnsville, North Carolina. Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)

- *Independence National Historical Park* - The park issued a request for proposals for the City Tavern building. The lease would last 10 years or more, starting on July 1. The original City Tavern was built in 1773 and served as the unofficial meeting site for the First Continental Congress. The original was razed after a fire in 1834, and a replica was built in its place in 1975. Most recently, it was run by Chef Walter Staib as an American Colonial-themed restaurant for 26 years and closed in 2020 due to effects of the pandemic. Source: [NBC Philadelphia](#)

- *Indiana Dunes National Park* - The park has announced that they are seeking proposals from the local community for short-term housing for its seasonal workforce. Source: [Indiana Dunes National Park](#)

- *Joshua Tree National Park* - The park opened backcountry permits online for the first time on February 1. Source: [Z107.7](#)

- *Katmai National Park and Preserve* - The park has announced the release of a prospectus for two hunting guide concession contracts. Each contract will span a term of ten years, starting on January 1, 2024. Proposals are due March 31. Source: [Katmai National Park and Preserve](#)

- *Katmai National Park and Preserve, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve* - On January 31, the Environmental Protection Agency rejected a permit for the

- proposed Pebble Mine project on Bristol Bay. The project was wrapped up in a legal battle for over 20 years. The National Parks Conservation Association, among many other groups, advocated against the project due to its potential negative effects on the salmon fishery and greater ecosystem effects on the bay and both Katmai and Lake Clark. Source: [National Parks Conservation Association](#)
- *Mount Rainier National Park* - A team of scientists visited the Hinman Glacier, located between the high peaks of Mount Rainier and Glacier Peak, and found that the glacier is no longer flowing due to global climate change. The largest patch of ice found was 10 acres, which was too small and too thin to flow. Source: [Oregon Live](#)
 - *Mount Rainier National Park, North Cascades National Park, Olympic National Park* - On January 25, Washington's National Park Fund announced that it is awarding a record \$1.1 million for 42 priority projects at the three parks in 2023. The project foci for this year include advancing science and research, improving the visitor experience, expanding volunteerism and stewardship, and embracing inclusion. Source: [The Seattle Times](#)
 - *National Historic Landmarks Program* (NPS-administered program) - On January 24, the NPS released a draft report assessment of the Beaufort National Historic Landmark District (South Carolina). Advocates for the district had asked the NPS to conduct the report due to an increase in large development projects proposed in the district and concerns about them affecting its historic character. The report outlines the district's current condition, key threats, and recommendations to preserve it, and is open for public comment through March 11. Source: [The Island Packet](#)
 - *North Cascades National Park* - *GoSkagit.com* published [an article](#) about the reintroduction of fishers to the North Cascades. The "first stage" of fisher reintroduction wrapped up in Summer 2022, and an NPS report documented that the project released at least 80 fishers into the wild, with at least 50% of them surviving the first breeding season, as well as instances of documented reproduction. This summer, biologists will set up 150 wildlife cameras and hair snag stations. Source: *GoSkagit.com*
 - *Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument* - *Arizona Public Media* published [an article](#) about the Hia Ced O'odham people's efforts to become federally recognized as a Tribe. In the article, one member of the Hia-Ced Hemajkam, LLC governing board said they hope to reclaim some of their land, specifically Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument and Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge. They stated, "You're just a babysitter for us right now, and that's fine. But we want to get our home back, and that's our goal." Source: *Arizona Public Media*
 - *Ozark National Scenic Riverways* - The NPS has issued a concessions prospectus

for a contract to provide canoe and tube rental with shuttle services, camp store, and firewood sales in the Round Spring District. Proposals are due April 28. Source:

[Ozark National Scenic Riverways](#)

- *Petrified Forest National Park* - Paleontologists from the park, in collaboration with researchers at Virginia Tech University and the University of Washington, published a paper in the scientific journal, *Nature*, identifying a new species of fossil amphibian from the park. The species is named *Fungusvermis gilmorei*, and it is the oldest caecilian documented, aged to the Triassic era. The fossil was found in 2019 at a site called Thunderstorm Ridge. The name of the species, which is worm-shaped, was inspired by the song "Funky Worm", as well as Ned Gilmore, the Collections Manager at the Academy of Natural Sciences at Drexel University. Source: [Petrified Forest National Park](#)
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - The Point Reyes National Seashore Association, NPS, and The Marine Mammal Center have put a live webcam at the park, and they recently captured an elephant seal birth [on film](#). Source: *Your Park, Your Place*, February 3, 2022 (Point Reyes National Seashore Association newsletter)
- *Reconstruction Era National Historic Network* (an NPS-administered program) - Three new sites have been added to the network: the African American Civil War Museum in Washington, D.C., the Texas Freedom Colonies Project, and the Striebey Church, School, and Cemetery Cultural Heritage Site in Asheboro, NC. Source: [Reconstruction Era National Historical Park](#)
- *Redwood National and State Parks - Humboldt Now* published [an article](#) about the parks' collaboration with Cal Poly Humboldt's Center Activities Department on their "Forests for All" program, which helps underserved student communities experience public lands and learn about ecology. The program is funded with support from the National Park Trust, California State Parks Foundation, and Redwood Parks Conservancy. Source: *Humboldt Now*
- *Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance* (an NPS-administered program) - *Bakersfield.com* published [an article](#) about an effort to create a "Kern Gateway Trail," including support from a landscape architect and outdoor recreation planner from the RTCA, Carlos Flores. The project would unite a series of parcels owned by the U.S. Forest Service, Kern County, City of Bakersfield, Caltrans, Southern California Edison, and private landowners. Source: *Bakersfield.com*
- *Rocky Mountain National Park - Climbing* published [an article](#) about the closure of Chaos Canyon after a large rockfall event in June 2022. The NPS has said the area is still highly unstable and is being actively monitored. Though some climbers have accused the park unnecessarily closing more of the park than necessary due to ongoing tensions between park management and climbers, the park maintains that it has made significant efforts to do outreach with climbers and the closures are for

public safety. Source: *Climbing*

- *Saguaro National Park* - *Tucson.com* published [an article](#) about the park's multi-year efforts to get rid of invasive buffelgrass from several locations across the park. The grass crowds out native plants and fuels wildfires. Source: *Tucson.com*
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - The Sierra Nevada red fox has been documented by trail cameras in the southern end of the park for the first time since the 1930s. The species is listed as federally endangered and was thought to be non-existent in the Sierra Nevada until a small population was found near Sonora Pass in 2010. That site is over 100 miles north of Taboose Pass, where the recent individual was spotted. The two populations are suspected to be connected. The camera survey is being coordinated by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, with support from the UC Davis Mammalian Ecology and Conservation Unit, Inyo and Sierra National Forests, NPS staff from Sequoia, Kings Canyon, and Yosemite National Parks, the California Department of Water Resources, and Southern California Edison. Source: [Tahoe Daily Tribune](#)
- *Shenandoah National Park* - *WMRA* published [an article](#) about the park's Search and Rescue program, including an interview with Chief Ranger Cynthia Sirk-Fear and Supervisory Ranger Kevin Moses. Source: *WRMA*
- *Springfield Armory National Historic Site* - The park, in collaboration with the Friends of Springfield Armory NHS, is organizing a public symposium on Henry Knox on May 6. The park is accepting proposals for presentations through March 8. Source: [Springfield Armory National Historic Site](#)
- *Theodore Roosevelt National Park* - North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum submitted a letter to the National Park Service asking it to maintain a herd of wild horses at the park. The park has expressed a preferred alternative in a proposed Livestock Management Plan that would eventually eliminate the wild horses from the park. The public comment period closed on January 31. The North Dakota state legislature is also considering a resolution that urges the NPS to preserve the wild horses and longhorn steers in the park. Source: [North Dakota Office of the Governor](#)
- *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - The park has moved backcountry driving reservations online to [recreation.gov](#). Some will be released three months ahead of time and some will be released one month ahead of time. A group called Caldera Action has written a letter to the park questioning several aspects of the backcountry management plan, including the limited number of permits, limited open hours, and the lack of availability of last-minute trip planning. They also called into question whether or not the National Environmental Policy Act had been appropriately heeded in the park's decision making. Source: [Los Alamos Daily Post](#), [National Parks Traveler](#)

- *Virgin Islands National Park* - On January 28, the Friends of Virgin Islands National Park hosted their annual meeting at Trunk Bay. Nearly 100 people attended, including Superintendent Nigel Fields and keynote speaker Robert "Bob" Stanton, former Director of the National Park Service. Source: [The St. Thomas Source](#)
- *Virgin Islands National Park* - The park recently began a project that includes bulkhead repairs, pier replacement, and creek dredging by the Cruz Bay Visitor Center. Facilities currently remain open, though full closures to the marina are expected from April 25 through mid-August. The visitor center will remain open. The work is part of the ongoing recovery efforts from Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Source: [Virgin Islands National Park](#)
- *War in the Pacific National Historical Park* - From January 27 to February 25, a team of scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is conducting a search for submerged shipwrecks, aircraft, underwater vehicles, artillery, and other artifacts related to the 1944 invasion of Guam during World War II. They are using underwater remote sensing equipment and diver-based photogrammetry surveys. Source: [NOAA Ocean Exploration](#)
- *Washita Battlefield National Historic Site* - A group of Cheyenne and Arapaho leaders are working to get the park renamed, arguing that "battle" is an inappropriate word for a surprise attack that left several dozen Native individuals dead. Cheyenne leaders asked Congress to not name it a battlefield in the 1990s, but the name was designated as such. Source: [Tulsa World/The Oklahoman](#)
- *Weir Farm National Historical Park* - The park released a "[Year in Review](#)" for 2022, outlining highlights and statistics for the park, its programs, and its community partnerships. Source: Weir Farm National Historical Park
- *Wild and Scenic Rivers Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On January 24, a group of officials met to observe and discuss the effect of ATVs upon the river corridor of Gravelly Run. Gravelly Run is a tributary of the Great Egg Harbor River and has a Wild and Scenic River designation. NPS staff were present, as well as the Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association, Pinelands Preservation Alliance, the Great Egg Harbor River Council, and Hamilton Township. The group observed damage to the banks and riverbed that could have adverse effects on the local ecosystem. Hamilton Township Committee is considering adopting an ordinance authorizing police to confiscate and destroy ATVs being driven illegally within municipal limits, as has been enabled by a New Jersey state statute and implemented in other municipalities. Source: [The Press of Atlantic City](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - New research from the park about bison and brucellosis was published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. The

results of the study found that the 900-day quarantine procedure for wildlife and livestock surveillance is needlessly long and that 300 days is sufficient. They also recommended that the burden of testing for bison be lowered. Source: [American Veterinary Medical Association](#)

- *Yellowstone National Park* - KBZK published [an article](#) about the competing infrastructure needs for limited funding at the park in the aftermath of historic flooding in Summer 2022. Source: *KBZK*
- *Yellowstone National Park* - The *Billings-Gazette* published [an article](#) from the Yellowstone Volcano Observatory profiling the park's research permitting coordinator, Annie Carlson, and the process for balancing scientific needs with the other needs of the park. (*Editor note: The article notes that Annie has recently departed to be the chief of resources for the western Arctic national park units.*) Source: *Billings-Gazette*
- *Yosemite National Park* - *SF Gate* published [an article](#) about the two rangers who have staffed Tuolumne Meadows in the wintertime and taken highcountry snow surveys for 12 seasons, Rob and Laura Pilewski. Source: *SF Gate*

Personnel Changes

- *Denali National Park and Preserve* - Vernon Cody was selected as the new deputy superintendent. Vernon has over 29 years of NPS experience, most recently as the Superintendent of Hovenweep and Natural Bridges National Monuments in Utah. Source: [Denali National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Fort Scott National Historic Site* - Jill Jaworski was selected as the new superintendent. Jill has over 20 years of NPS experience, most recently as the chief park ranger at Cape Lookout National Seashore and acting superintendent at Appomattox Court House National Historical Park and Booker T Washington National Monument. She started her new role in November. Source: [The Fort Scott Tribune](#)

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

- Dorothy MacDonald Barson, 92, passed away on January 26. Dorothy worked for 34 years for the NPS at Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site "as a tour guide." Source: [Poughkeepsie Journal](#)

- Margaret Bissell, 90, passed away on December 16. She and her partner Bill "spent many summers volunteering for the National Park System while exploring in their motor home." Source: [Legacy/Los Angeles Times](#)
- William F. Moss, 80, passed away on January 26. He spent his career as a firefighter and maintenance technician for the National Park Service and retired in 1995. Source: [Cape Gazette](#)
- Karen Taylor-Goodrich, 68, passed away on January 30. Karen worked for the NPS for over 40 years, including as the superintendent of North Cascades National Park and an associate NPS director. Source: Butch Farabee/Tina Yerzy
- Robert "Bob" W. Gracey, 94, passed away on January 16. During Bob's role as an elected member of the Inyo County Board of Supervisors, he "played a critical role in the establishment of Manzanar National Historic Site." In 2016, he was the recipient of the Sue Kunitomi Embrey Legacy Award from the Manzanar Committee. Source: [Legacy/Inyo Register](#)
- Douglas Vernon Thydean, 68, passed away on January 13. He worked for a time as an NPS electrician at Rocky Mountain National Park. Source: [Estes Park News](#)
- Charles L. Vickers, 85, passed away on December 30. Charles was a retired U.S. Mint sculptor-engraver who designed the national park quarters for Arches, Hawai'i Volcanoes, and Glacier. Source: [Coin World](#)

Retired

- John Broward, the superintendent of Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park and Pu'uuhonua o Hōnaunau National Historical Park, is retiring after 35 years with the NPS. He has also worked at Everglades National Park and Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. Source: [Big Island Video News](#)
- John Reynolds is retiring after over 40 years of serving the Yosemite and El Portal Post Offices, including the last 10 years as the Postmaster of the Yosemite office. John was also born and raised in Yosemite Valley, and both his parents worked in the park. Source: [NPR](#)

In the News

- John Donahue has been selected as the new executive director of the Pinchot Institute of Conservation. He previously served as a former superintendent of Delaware Gap National Recreation Area. Source: [yahoolsports/Pocono Record](#)
- Tom Habecker has a book about to be published in March 2023, *Send a Ranger*,

- about his 32-year career in the National Park Service. Source: [Rowman and Littlefield](#)
- Mike Malone, a retired NPS volunteer coordinator at the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, will be honored in a special event by Boy Scout Troop 127 and Las Virgenes Scouting Alumni Association. It will be held at Paramount Ranch and is called "Scouting's Salute to Mike Malone," in honor of two decades of mentoring Eagle Scouts on their capstone projects at various locations throughout the Conejo Valley, including fences at Paramount Ranch, native plant restoration at Rancho Sierra Vista, picnic tables at Peter Strauss Ranch, and trail repair in Cheeseboro Canyon. Source: [Thousand Oaks Acorn](#)
 - Dale Morse was featured in [a profile](#) by *The News Virginian* about his work as a co-founder of the Virginia Institute of Blacksmithing. Dale learned how to blacksmith as a 9-year-old volunteer with the National Park Service. Source: *The News Virginian*
 - Mariah Reading [was featured](#) in the *Bangor Daily News* for her landscape artwork made from trash found in natural spaces. Her art is currently on display in an exhibition at the Center for Maine Contemporary Art. Much of her artwork is of and from national parks, and she has previously been both a seasonal ranger and artist-in-residence at several parks. Source: *Bangor Daily News*
 - Katie Sponsler wrote [an op-ed](#) in *Time* about the need for a change in the culture and training of law enforcement officers, which was informed by her experiences as an NPS ranger. Source: *Time*

Open for Comment

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

- *Alaska Region* - Public comment is [open until March 10](#) on a proposal to reverse the 2020 Alaska Hunting and Trapping rule on national preserve lands in Alaska. The rule currently allows specific sport hunting practices, including bear baiting across the state of Alaska, and this reversal of the regulation would only apply to national preserves. Source: [National Park Service Alaska Region](#)
- *Denali National Park and Preserve* - Public comment is [open until February 15](#) on changes to the Superintendent's Compendium around commercial photography. Source: [Denali National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Everglades National Park* - Public comment is [open until February 26](#) on a Gulf Coast Site Plan, which seeks to make improvements related to damage inflicted from Hurricane Irma and future climate change resiliency. Source: [Everglades National Park](#)
- *Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve* - Public comment is [open until February 18](#)

- on changes to the Superintendent's Compendium. Source: [Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - Public comment is [open until February 17](#) on changes to the wilderness camping permit system, including party sizes, reservation windows, and online permitting. Source: [Daily Inter Lake](#)
 - *Grand Portage National Monument* - Public comment is [open until March 4](#) on a proposed project to realign a segment of Mile Creek Road/County State Aid Highway 17 and construct a new bridge across Grand Portage Creek. The project is proposed in collaboration with Cook County (MN) and the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (Ojibwe). Source: [Grand Portage National Monument](#)
 - *Haleakalā National Park, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has [opened public comment until February 27](#) on the designation of critical habitat for the federally threatened 'I'iwi on the islands of Kaua'i, Maui, and Hawai'i, including Haleakalā and Hawai'i Volcanoes. Source: [Kaua'i Now](#)
 - *North Cascades National Park* - Public comment is [open until March 8](#) on an environmental assessment for two projects: a rerouting of the Brush Creek Trail and relocation of the Graybeal Hiker and Stock Camps, and the construction of additional backcountry accommodations at Six Mile Camp and Bridge Creek Camp. Source: [North Cascades National Park](#)
 - *Rock Creek Park* - Public comment is [open until February 8](#) on a proposed plan to improve the Rock Creek Park Golf Course, including efforts to reinvigorate the course's historic attributes and improve sustainability, as well as backlogged maintenance issues that will enhance the course for users. The NPS leases the course from the National Links Trust, and the work would be funded by NLT. Source: [Rock Creek Park](#)
 - *Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway* - Public comment is [open until March 15](#) on management and visitor opportunities at Fairy Falls Day Use Area. Source: [Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway](#)
 - *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - Public comment is [open until March 4](#) on a tree hazard mitigation plan for KNP Complex Fire burn areas. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
 - *Virgin Islands National Park* - Public comment is [open until February 21](#) on a Notice of Realty Action for a land exchange of property on the island of St. John with the Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands to construct a public K-12 school. The park has already issued a Finding of No Significant Impact for the land exchange, and this public comment period refers to the realty action. Source: [Virgin Islands National Park](#)

- *Virgin Islands National Park* - Public comment is [open until February 21](#) on a plan for the redevelopment and management of the Caneel Bay area. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve* - Public comment is [open until February 19](#) on proposed changes to the Superintendent's Compendium, including instituting a camping restriction at the Slana Ranger Station and rescinding interim language regarding commercial filming. Source: [Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Wupatki National Monument* - Public comment is [open until March 2](#) on a wilderness study for the park, which will seek to refine the boundaries of an area that reflects wilderness character for consideration of a future wilderness designation. Source: [KNAU](#)
- *Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve* - Written public comments are open until March 20 on a request to amend a concession contract for hunting services at Upper Seventymile airstrip, including increases to number of clients and consecutive camping days. Source: [Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve](#)
- *Chesapeake National Recreation Area* (proposed) - A draft bill was introduced by Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and U.S. Representative John Sarbanes (D-MD) that would unite regional sites and partner parks into the Chesapeake National Recreation Area. The lawmakers have established a 90-day public comment period, [open until February 12](#), to help finalize the legislation. Source: [Bay Journal](#)

Other Department of the Interior News

- *USFWS considers delisting grizzlies* - On February 3, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that it is conducting assessments about the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem and Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem grizzly populations to determine whether or not they may be removed from the Endangered Species Act list. The States of Montana and Wyoming have petitioned to delist the two populations because of high population size and reduced threats. 12-month reviews will be conducted, which are expected to be contentious, given a long history of lawsuits around potential delisting. Source: [E&E News](#)
- *\$580 million for Tribal water rights* - On February 2, the Department of the Interior announced the allocation of \$580 million in funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Reclamation Water Settlements Fund for 14 different settlements and projects. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *SEIS for Willow Project released* - On February 1, the Bureau of Land Management-Alaska completed its final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the

proposed Willow Master Development Plan in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska. In their press release, the Department of the Interior said it "has substantial concerns about the Willow project and the preferred alternative as presented in the final SEIS, including direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions and impacts to wildlife and Alaska Native subsistence." 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

February 2 – The Senate agreed to:

- S. Res. 30, to constitute the majority party's membership on certain committees for the One Hundred Eighteenth Congress, or until their successors are chosen as follows (all below members are Democrats unless otherwise indicated):

Committee On Appropriations:

Patty Murray (Chair, WA), Dianne Feinstein (CA), Dick Durbin (IL), Jack Reed (RI), Jon Tester, (MT), Jeanne Shaheen (NH), Jeff Merkley (OR), Chris Coons (DE), Brian Schatz (HI), Tammy Baldwin (WI), Chris Murphy (CT), Joe Manchin (WV), Chris Van Hollen (MD), Martin Heinrich (NM), Gary Peters (MI).

Committee On Energy And Natural Resources:

Joe Manchin (Chair, WV), Ron Wyden (OR), Maria Cantwell (WA), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Martin Heinrich (NM) Mazie Hirono (HI), Angus King (I-ME), Catherine Cortez Masto (NV), Mark Kelly (AZ), John Hickenlooper (CO).

Committee On The Environment And Public Works:

Tom Carper (Chair, DE), Ben Cardin (MD), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Sheldon Whitehouse (RI), Jeff Merkley (OR), Ed Markey (MA), Debbie Stabenow (MI), Mark Kelly (AZ), Alex Padilla (CA), John Fetterman (PA).

Committee On Indian Affairs:

Brian Schatz (Chair, HI), Maria Cantwell (WA), Jon Tester (MT), Catherine Cortez Masto (NV), Tina Smith (MN), Ben Ray Lujan (NM).

- S. Res. 31, to constitute the minority party's membership on certain committees for the One Hundred Eighteenth Congress, or until their successors are chosen as follows (all below members are Republicans):

Committee On Appropriations:

Susan Collins (ME), Mitch McConnell (KY), Lisa Murkowski (AK), Lindsey Graham (SC), Jerry Moran (KS), John Hoeven (ND), John Boozman (AR), Shelley Capito (WV), John Kennedy (LA), Cindy Hyde-Smith (MS), Bill Hagerty (TN), Katie Britt (AL), Marco Rubio (FL), Deb Fischer (NE).

Committee On Energy And Natural Resources:

John Barrasso (WY), James Risch (ID), Mike Lee (UT), Steve Daines (MT), Lisa Murkowski (AK), John Hoeven (ND), Bill Cassidy (LA), Cindy Hyde-Smith (MS), Josh Hawley (MO).

Committee On The Environment And Public Works:

Shelley Capito (WV), Kevin Cramer (ND), Cynthia Lummis (WY), Markwayne Mullin (OK), Pete Ricketts (NE), John Boozman (AR), Roger Wicker (MS), Dan Sullivan (AK), Lindsey Graham (SC)

Committee On Indian Affairs:

Lisa Murkowski (AK), John Hoeven (ND), Steve Daines (MT), Markwayne Mullin (OK), Mike Rounds (SD).

House Actions

January 24 – The House passed H.R. 159, amended, to implement merit-based reforms to the civil service hiring system that replace degree-based hiring with skills- and competency-based hiring, by a vote of 422 yeas to 2 nays.

January 25 – The House agreed to H. Res. 56, electing certain Republican members to the Committee on Appropriations:

Harold Rogers (KY), Robert Aderholt (AL), Mike Simpson (ID), John Carter (TX), Ken Calvert (CA), Tom Cole (OK), Mario Diaz-Balart (FL), Steve Womack (AR), Chuck Fleischmann (TN), Dave Joyce (OH), Andy Harris (MD), Mark Amodei (NV), Chris Stewart (UT), David Valadao (CA), Dan Newhouse (WA), John Moolenaar (MI), John Rutherford (NE), Ben Cline (VA), Guy Reschenthaler (PA), Mike Garcia (CA), Ashley Hinson (IA), Tony Gonzales (TX), Julia Letlow (LA), Michael Cloud (TX), Michael Guest (MS), Ryan Zinke (MT), Andrew Clyde (GA), Jake LaTurner (KS), Jerry Carl (AL), Stephanie Bice (OK), Scott Franklin (FL), Jake Ellzey (TX), Juan Ciscomani (AZ).

The House had previously agreed to H. Res. 14 on January 10 that named Rep. Kay Granger (TX) as chair of the House Appropriations Committee.

January 26 – The House agreed to H. Res. 56, electing certain Democratic members to the Committee On Appropriations:

Steny Hoyer (MD), Marcy Kaptur (OH), Sanford Bishop (GA), Barbara Lee (CA), Betty McCollum (MN), Dutch Ruppersberger (MD), Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL), Henry Cuellar (TX), Chellie Pingree (MN), Mike Quigley (IL), Derek Kilmer (WA), Matt Cartwright

(PA), Grace Meng (NY), Mark Pocan (WI), Pete Aguilar (CA), Lois Frankel (FL), Bonnie Watson Coleman (NJ), Norma Torres (CA), Ed Case (HI), Adriano Espaillat (NY), Josh Harder (CA), Jennifer Wexton (VA), David Trone (MD), Lauren Underwood (IL), Susie Lee (NV), Joe Morelle (NY)

The House had previously agreed to H. Res. 15 on January 10 that named Rep. Rosa DeLauro (CT) as ranking Democratic member of the House Appropriations Committee.

January 27 – House Appropriations Committee Chair Kay Granger (TX) issued a press release announcing the Republican members of the various appropriations subcommittees, including the following members who will serve on the Interior and Environment subcommittee that handles the National Park Service appropriations: Mike Simpson (Chair, ID), Chris Stewart (UT), Mark Amodei (NV), Guy Reschenthaler (PA), Michael Cloud (TX), Ryan Zinke (MT), Jake Ellzey (TX).

January 31 – The House agreed to:

- H. Res. 79, electing certain Democratic members to the Committee on Natural Resources

Grace Napolitano (CA), Jim Costa (CA), Gregorio Sablan (MP), Jared Huffman (CA), Ruben Gallego (AZ), Joe Neguse (CO), Mike Levin (CA), Katie Porter (CA), Teresa Leger Fernández (NM), Melanie Stansbury (NM), Mary Sattler Peltola (AK), Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY), Kevin Mullin (CA), Val Hoyle (OR), Sydney Kamlager-Dove (CA), Seth Magaziner (RI), Nydia Velázquez (NY), Ed Case (HI), Debbie Dingell (MI).

The House had previously agreed to H. Res. 15 on January 10 that named Raul Grijalva (AZ) as ranking Democratic member of the Natural Resources Committee.

- H. Res. 80, electing certain Republican members to the Committee on Natural Resources:

Doug Lamborn (CO), Rob Wittman (VA), Tom McClintock (CA), Paul Gosar (AZ), Garret Graves (LA), Amata Coleman Radewagen (AS), Doug LaMalfa (CA), Daniel Webster (FL), Jenniffer González-Colon (PR), Russ Fulcher (ID), Pete Stauber (MN), John Curtis (UT), Tom Tiffany (WI), Jerry Carl (AL), Matt Rosendale (MT), Lauren Boebert (CO), Cliff Bentz (OR), Jennifer Kiggans (VA), James Moylan (GU), Wesley Hunt (TX), Doug Collins (GA), Anna Paulina Luna (FL), John Duarte (CA), Harriet Hageman (WY).

The House had previously agreed to H. Res. 14 on January 10 that named Bruce Westerman (AR) as chair of the Natural Resources Committee.

January 31 – The House Natural Resources Committee Ranking Democrat Raúl M. Grijalva (D-Ariz.) announced the Committee's top Democratic positions, as follows:

- Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva (AZ) – *Ranking Member, Full Committee*
- Rep. Jared Huffman (CA) – *Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and*

Fisheries

- Rep. Joe Neguse (CO) – *Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Federal Lands*
- Rep. Teresa Leger Fernández (NM) – *Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs*
- Rep. Melanie Stansbury (NM) – *Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations*
- Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY) – *Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources*
- Rep. Sydney Kamlager-Dove (CA) – *Vice Ranking Member, Full Committee*

February 1 – The House Committee on Natural Resources Chairman Bruce Westerman (R-AR) announced the following Republican subcommittee rosters for the 118th Congress, among others:

- **Subcommittee on Federal Lands:**

Tom Tiffany (Chair, WI), John Curtis (Vice Chair, UT), Doug Lamborn (CO), Tom McClintock (CA), Russ Fulcher (ID), Pete Stauber (MN), Cliff Bentz (OR), Jennifer Kiggans (VA), Jim Moylan (GU)

- **Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations:**

Paul Gosar (Chair, AZ), Mike Collins (Vice Chair, GA), Matt Rosendale (MT), Wesley Hunt (TX), Anna Paulina Luna (FL)

- **Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs:**

Harriet Hageman (Chair, WY), Jenniffer González-Colón (Vice Chair, PR), Amata Coleman Radewagen (AS), Doug LaMalfa (CA), Jerry Carl (AL), Jim Moylan (GU)

February 1 – The Committee on Natural Resources held an organizational meeting. The Committee adopted its rules for the 118th Congress, as amended. The Staff Resolution was agreed to.

Incidents

Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.

Big Bend National Park Archaeologist fired

A 52-year-old employee of the Center for Big Bend Studies at Sul Ross State University was fired on December 14. According to the individual, they were not informed why. The university said it would not comment because it is a "personnel issue." The individual was in the midst of working on a "massive archaeological survey" of Big Bend National Park. The park confirmed that the Center for Big Bend Studies had contacted them regarding concerns about the individual's work in the park, and the park suspended the individual's NPS permit to work there. Source: [Texas Monthly](#)

Blue Ridge Parkway

Missing person found

On January 25, while responding to a report of damaged gates near the U.S. Route 276 entrance to the Parkway, rangers observed an unoccupied vehicle in a nearby overlook that appeared to have damage consistent with attempting to drive through a closed gate. The vehicle was registered to a 39-year-old. A search for the individual was started, including NPS staff, Transylvania County Sheriff's Office, Transylvania County Rescue Squad, Transylvania County Emergency Management, Henderson County Rescue Squad, Haywood County Rescue Squad, North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation, Brevard Fire Department, Cedar Mountain Fire Rescue, Rosman Fire Rescue, Lake Toxaway Fire Rescue, North Transylvania Fire Rescue, Little River Fire Department, Haywood County Emergency Management, Haywood County Sheriff's Office, National Weather Service Greenville-Spartanburg, North Carolina State Highway Patrol, South Carolina Search and Rescue Dog Association, North Carolina Forest Service, and Connestee Fire Rescue. The individual was found on January 26 in a remote area near Frying Pan Tower. He was extracted, treated for exposure-related injuries, and transported to the Transylvania Regional Hospital in stable condition. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#), [Transylvania County Sheriff's Office Facebook page](#)

Channel Islands National Park

Rockslide

A series of storms in January 2023 caused rockslides on the Nidiver Canyon Trail. Since it is the only "practical public access point" on San Miguel Island, all trails and facilities on the island are now closed to the public, except for the sandy beaches of Cuyler Harbor. The park is working to make repairs, but there is no estimated reopening date yet. Source: [Channel Islands National Park](#)

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area

Erosion closes road

As of February 1, the park has closed the Whitewater Creek entrance due to erosion of the road and parking lot from recent rainfall. It is unclear when it will reopen. Source: [WSB-TV](#)

Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park

Sinkhole

On January 4, a visitor reported a sinkhole that opened up near the Potomac Dam No. 4 Left Abutment. Park staff have been monitoring the formation for any changes in the sinkhole or dam. Thus far, there have not been any noticeable changes. The area has been fenced off, but the towpath is still considered safe and remains open. The NPS is working with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to address the sinkhole. Due to the region's limestone karst terrain, sinkholes are common in the area. Source: [Herald-Mail Media](#)

Death Valley National Park

Murder-suicide

On January 13, a 73-year-old called 911 and reported that they had just killed their 72-year-old spouse and that they intended to kill themselves. They gave a location of where to find their bodies, which was inside the park. Law enforcement from the NPS, Inyo County Sheriff's Office, Inyo County Coroner's Office, California Highway Patrol, and Bureau of Land Management responded and found both individuals deceased, with a note saying that the 72-year-old was suffering from chronic health conditions. Source: [KTNV](#)

Death Valley National Park

Hiker rescue

On February 1, two hikers on the Telescope Peak Trail slipped into a steep, icy drainage about two miles from the trailhead. The two hikers had crampons, trekking poles, and a 200-foot rope, but they were unable to maintain their footing or climb back up the trail. One of the hikers utilized a cell phone to request assistance. A California Highway Patrol H-80 helicopter was able to utilize a winch to rescue the two hikers. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)

Grand Teton National Park, Yellowstone National Park

High speed chase

On January 27, a law enforcement ranger attempted to make contact with a vehicle that was parked in the road at Jackson Lake Junction. As soon as the ranger put on their patrol vehicle lights, the driver fled the scene in their vehicle. The individual drove at speeds of up to 90 miles per hour for 24 miles from the Moran area to Highway 89. Due to the poor weather conditions and the risks involved, officers did not pursue the vehicle, and instead deployed spike strips at the Glacier View Turnout. All northbound traffic was stopped at Moose Junction, snowplow operations were paused, and Teton County Sheriff's Office deputies were staged at the Gros Ventre roundabout. The driver passed through the spike strips and continued southbound until passing another NPS officer, and they then pulled over. The 54-year-old driver was placed in custody and charged with obstructing traffic, speeding, violation of a traffic control device, unsafe operations, fleeing, and eluding. It was discovered that the individual had been cited by NPS officials an hour before the chase began because they got their vehicle stuck in a closed area north of Flagg Ranch, south of the southern entrance to Yellowstone. They had received a citation to appear by a Yellowstone law enforcement ranger for operating a non-oversnow vehicle on an oversnow route. Source: [Jackson Hole News and Guide](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Vehicular homicide conviction

On February 2, a 21-year-old was sentenced to 65 months in federal prison and \$5,000 in

restitution for vehicular homicide and vehicular assault, in connection with a drunk driving incident in the park in June 2021. The individual was intoxicated, driving 90 miles per hour, and crashed their vehicle into an embankment on the Spur. Two 19-year old passengers were seriously injured in the crash. One suffered "life-altering injuries" and the other died shortly after the accident. The driver was treated for minor injuries. Source: [The United States Attorney's Office: Eastern District of Tennessee](#)

Haleakalā National Park

Flooding closure

On January 28, the park closed its visitor center due to flash flooding conditions in the region. The summit and Kīpahulu area remained open. As of February 6, it had not yet reopened. Source: [Haleakalā National Park](#), [Beat of Hawaii](#)

Haleakalā National Park

Diesel fuel spill

On January 29, about 700 gallons of diesel fuel spilled from the Maui Space Surveillance Complex at the summit of Haleakalā. The U.S. Space Force stated, "Due to a mechanical issue, a diesel fuel pump for an on-site backup generator failed to shut off." The spill was discovered by maintenance personnel on the morning of January 30. A group of spill experts from the Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center are assessing the area for remediation. The Space Force notified the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Health of the spill. Source: [Honolulu Star Advertiser](#)

Natchez Trace Parkway

Vehicle fatality

On January 25, a car ran off the parkway just north of Tupelo, hit an embankment, and landed upside down in a creek. Lee County Sheriff's Office, Saltillo police and fire departments, NPS staff, and the Tupelo Fire Department dive team responded and found the 55-year-old driver deceased. There were no passengers. Source: [Daily Journal](#)

National Mall and Memorial Parks

NPS to vacate unsheltered population

Signs were recently placed at McPherson Square, notifying individuals living in the park, that the area will be vacated of inhabitants by mid-April. The NPS later announced that they are moving the clearing date up to February 15 due to a request by the Washington, D.C. Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, who stated that recent crime and drug issues have created dangerous conditions for social workers and mental health specialists. There are currently over 70 tents in McPherson Square, making it the largest encampment in Washington, D.C. In the past year, there have been 30 arrests by U.S. Park Police and three drug overdoses at the site. The District has said that they will stage a bus at the site to provide case management, address residents' concerns, and

distribute warm clothing and hypothermia supplies. The NPS has previously stated that it plans to clear all unsheltered individuals from NPS lands in Washington, D.C., by the end of the year. Source: [WJLA](#), [DCist](#)

National Mall and Memorial Parks

Arrest for pedestrian deaths

On January 31, the U.S. Park Police arrested a 61-year-old suspect in connection with an April 2021 crash in East Potomac Park that killed two pedestrians. The individual was charged with negligent homicide. Source: [United States Park Police](#)

Point Reyes National Seashore

Missing kayaker

Editor note: There are two conflicting reports about the circumstances of a missing kayaker. On January 27, a 39-year-old kayaker went missing while offshore from Lawson's Landing in Dillon Beach. It is unclear whether there were two kayakers and they got separated, or whether only one was kayaking to retrieve a crabbing cage and the friend remained on the shore. Both stories say that the friend realized that the other kayaker was missing; in one story, the friend saw the individual's headlamp bobbing in the ocean; in the other, the friend realized they could no longer see the individual from shore.

The friend called emergency services for help. A search began that evening, involving the Coast Guard, NPS staff, Marin County and North Bay fire departments, and Marin County Sheriff's Department. The individual's kayak was found near the sea wall at Lawson's Landing. Searchers endured 20 mph winds and 2- to 4-foot waves before calling off the search at 2:40am. The search continued the following morning, with helicopters, drones, rescue boats, and a forward-looking infrared camera (FLIR). On midday on January 28, the search was changed to "recovery mode." On February 1, volunteers with California Rescue Divers found the individual's body about 100 yards offshore from Lawson's Landing. Source: [The Press Democrat](#), [The Mercury News](#)

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

Mountain lion killed by vehicle

On January 22, a mountain lion known as P-81 was likely killed by a vehicle on the Pacific Coast Highway near Las Posas Road. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife collected the puma's body and will perform a necropsy to confirm the cause of death. The individual was four years old and had originally been captured in March 2020. The mountain lion was significant to the park's long-term study due to two physical abnormalities - a kinked tail and only one descended testicle, which indicate potential inbreeding and low genetic diversity in the park. This is the ninth mountain lion that has died from road mortality since March 2022, and the 34th since the study began in 2002. Source: [Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area](#)

Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument Vandalism

On January 16, an individual vandalized property in the park. The park has a picture of the individual and is looking for any additional information the public may have. Source: [KTNV](#)

Zion National Park 2 hikers rescued

On January 20, two hikers attempted to hike the Subway route from the top, down. They were reported as overdue on January 21. A Utah Department of Public Safety helicopter was able to locate the hikers, utilizing Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR). They then lowered a rescuer to assist the hikers into the hovering helicopter by hoist. The hikers were transported to a waiting NPS medical team. One hiker was "dangerously hypothermic" and transported to a hospital. That individual was reported to now be in a stable condition. Source: [Zion National Park](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Arches National Park* - On January 27, the family of the 25-year-old visitor who was killed by a metal park gate that swung into a personal vehicle in June 2020 was awarded a sum of over \$10.5 million in U.S. District Court. Source: [KJZZ](#)
- *Channel Islands National Park* - A 60-foot fishing boat that went aground in Chinese Harbor on Santa Cruz Island on December 15, 2022, has now been removed. The vessel had 1,000 gallons of diesel fuel and 16,000 pounds of squid aboard, which crews worked to salvage. The boat was lifted onto a barge by Global Diving and Salvage on January 24. It was transported to a recycling facility in Long Beach, California, and clean-up in the Chinese Harbor is ongoing. Source: [KEYT](#)
- *Cuyahoga Valley National Park* - The Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad resumed its regular schedule and events on February 3. Sections of the track had been closed by the park in October 2022 due to erosion. The park conducted evaluations with a geotechnical engineer and will continue monitoring the tracks. Source: [Cleveland.com](#)
- *Smoky Mountains National Park* - On January 25, a panel of federal appellate court judges heard arguments from plaintiffs who were affected by the 2016 Gatlinburg fires about whether a federal judge correctly dismissed their lawsuits against the federal government. The plaintiffs allege that the NPS had inadequately warned the public about the fire's rapid approach to the town of Gatlinburg and other parts of Sevier County, resulting in 14 deaths and over \$1 billion in damages. The dismissal of the lawsuits pertained to inconsistent wording on a piece of federal paperwork called an SF-95. The decision is expected to be filed in "several months." Source: [WBIR](#)

Acknowledgments

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- Editor: Katie Wallace
- Tech and Production Support: Steve Pittleman, Emily Thompson, Theresa Manthripragada
- Regular Correspondent: Don Hellmann, Chris Soller
- Issue contributors: Bill Walters

If you see something that might be of interest to Coalition members, send it to 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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