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## **The Coalition Report**

### **Wednesday, January 11, 2023**

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***Editor Note:*** *In the November 30, 2022 Coalition Report, and a follow-up in the December 28, 2022 Report, we reported incorrect information about the illegal ad-hoc border wall in Arizona due to incorrect news source material that has since been corrected. The border wall had been built in the Coronado National Forest, not the Coronado National Memorial. We apologize for the mistake. Thanks to Frank Buono for bringing this to our attention.*

#### **Coalition Actions**

The Coalition has awarded Dr. Michael "Mike" Soukup with the 2022 George Hartzog Award, honoring his contributions toward natural resource stewardship at the National Park Service. We have also awarded this year's 1872 Award to Maria Burks, honoring her work as the Vice Chair of the Executive Council of the Coalition. [Read more](#) on the awardees and past Coalition awards.

The Coalition joined in [comments](#) on the Cumberland Island National Seashore proposed visitor use management plans. The comments express concern about the proposed increase from 300 to 700 daily visitors.

Coalition Chair Mike Murray participated in a *National Parks Traveler* [podcast](#) on the top 2022 stories from across the National Park System.

Coalition Chair Mike Murray and members Linda Mazzu and Mary Foley were featured in a *National Parks Traveler* [article](#) discussing the impacts of climate change on national parks.

## 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.*

- *New national park unit* - New Philadelphia National Historic Site, located in western Illinois, was established by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 (see more below in "Congressional Actions"). It expands the National Park System to 424 units. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *NPS ISB ranks drop*- The Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility obtained an internal memo from the NPS' associate director for visitor and resource protection about a 45% drop in special agents since 2003, resulting in under-investigation of property crimes and serious drug-related offenses. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *NPS visitation up, staffing down* - *National Parks Traveler* published [an article](#) in which they analyzed visitor levels and NPS staffing levels from 2000 to 2019, finding that for the vast majority of parks, visitation levels were up and the number of full-time employees had declined. The article details possible reasons for low staffing, as well as solutions. Source: *National Parks Traveler*
- *2022 "threatened and endangered" national parks* - *National Parks Traveler* published its fourth annual [list](#) of parks that are at risk for a variety of reasons. The media outlet focused on four main pressure points on the National Park System: climate change, staffing struggles, cultural resource threats, and maintenance backlogs. This year, nine parks made its "endangered" list, while nine parks or regions made its "threatened" list. Source: *National Parks Traveler*
- *Native plant pilot program* - The Native Plant Species Pilot Program Act was signed into law as a part of the 2023 government funding package. It will create a new pilot program at the NPS and Bureau of Land Management to support use of more native plants, particularly in burn areas. Source: [Senator Susan Collins \(ME\)](#)
- *GAOA success stories* - *National Parks Traveler* published [an article](#) documenting success stories from Great American Outdoors Act funding in 2022. Source: *National Parks Traveler*
- *Sea level rise research for parks* - Western Carolina University published an article about ongoing research that is focused on vulnerability assessments of coastal and Great Lakes national park units under rising sea levels. The research is funded by an NPS grant. 25 reports have been published thus far, and 20 are in the process of being published. Source: [Western Carolina University](#)

- *Cleaner water in national parks* - The National Parks Conservation Association published [an article](#) about the Waters of the U.S. Rule, which was recently passed by the Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers to protect wetlands and small streams and rivers. Among the parks affected by the rule are Indiana Dunes National Park, Big Cypress National Preserve, Everglades National Park, and Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Source: National Parks Conservation Association
- *Black Americans coming reembracing outdoors* - *YES! Magazine* published [an article](#) about decades of exclusion and marginalization of Black Americans from natural spaces, and the modern-day trend that is reversing that legacy. NPS staff are quoted in the article, including the agency's efforts to better connect with Black visitors. Source: *YES! Magazine*
- *"How does someone become a volcanologist?"* - The U.S. Geological Survey's Hawaiian Volcano Observatory published an article with this title, outlining career pathways for budding volcanologists. The National Park Service is mentioned for its various science pathways related to volcanology. Source: [U.S. Geological Survey](#)
- *NPS amphibian and flower research makes USGS top 10* - The U.S. Geological Survey compiled a "top 10" list of exciting science research they produced in 2022, including several papers on amphibians in national park units and a collaboration with NPS scientists to document the flowering pattern of saguaro cacti. Source: [U.S. Geological Survey](#)
- *"How to avoid dying in national parks"* - *Popular Science* published [an article](#) with this title, documenting the four most common types of accidental death - drowning, vehicle crashes, falls, and environmental factors like hypothermia or heat illness. Source: *Popular Science*

### **Around the Parks**

*Park reports are in alphabetical order.*

- *Acadia National Park* - New research published in *Northeastern Naturalist* shows that there has been a 43% reduction in wintering birds over the last 50 years. Though there are fewer birds, 33 species showed increased abundance. The research was conducted by the Schoodic Institute at Acadia, with support from the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count and NPS staff. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Arches National Park* - *The Salt Lake Tribune* published [an article](#) sharing statistics about the effects of timed entry on visitor satisfaction. The article argues that timed entry was successful and preferable to visitor use patterns before timed entry was enacted. Source: *The Salt Lake Tribune*

- *Cape Cod National Seashore* - The park will remove derelict structures and restore natural landscapes throughout the park, beginning in early 2023 and wrapping up by Spring 2024. The \$8.3 million project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [Cape Cod National Seashore](#)
- *Crater Lake National Park* - On January 1, the park moved to an entirely cashless system for entrance and permit fees, including the availability of advance passes on *recreation.gov*. Source: [KTVL](#)
- *Cumberland Island National Seashore* - The *Coastal Courier* published [an article](#) about opposition to the park's draft visitor use management plan, which was recently open for public comment. Opponents feel the amount of visitation and development proposed is adverse to the primitive experience visitors have come to enjoy. [Note: The Coalition also opposes the planned visitation levels; see above in *Coalition Actions*.] Source: *Coastal Courier*
- *Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve* - The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has found that Alaska's Western Arctic caribou herd population is the lowest it's been in over 40 years, at only 164,000 individuals. It has declined from a high of 500,000 in 2003. The Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group has made recommendations for hunting limits, particularly on females, as well as better hunting reporting. Climate change is believed to have had a large effect on the herd. An NPS study that documents the herd's crossing of the Kobuk River was cited in the article. Source: [Alaska Public Media](#)
- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - The park has issued a Request for Proposals for a 10-year residential master lease for the management of 39 residential units in the park. Proposals are due May 12. Source: [Golden Gate National Recreation Area](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - The Arizona Public Service Electric Company will soon begin construction on a new power substation at the South Rim Village. The substation will allow for more power capacity, particularly for future electric vehicle charging and the new Transcanyon Water Line. The park expects to transition its public shuttle buses to electric vehicles in the coming years. The \$16.8 million project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. It is expected to be wrapped up by early 2024. Source: [Williams-Grand Canyon News](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - The park announced a Finding of No Significant Impact for the Wears Valley Mountain Bike Trail System, which will consist of 11.8 miles of new mountain bike trails and 2.3 miles of pedestrian-only trails, as well as a 1-mile access road, bike wash and repair station, restrooms, picnic tables, and informational kiosk. Finding funding is the next step in the project, with no specified construction date as of yet. Source: [WYSH](#)

- *Hot Springs National Park* - The park will close the Fordyce Bathhouse Visitor Center and Museum from January 17 until mid-February to install new interpretive exhibits. The visitor center lobby will remain open to the public during this time. The project is being funded by fee dollars. Source: [Hot Springs National Park](#)
- *Joshua Tree National Park* - The park is conducting maintenance along the 49 Palms Trail from now until late March 2023. The trail will be closed from Sunday nights until Thursday afternoons, and open Fridays through Sundays. Source: [Joshua Tree National Park](#)
- *Korean War Veterans Memorial* - *The New York Times* published [an article](#) documenting an estimated 1,015 spelling errors on the memorial, the inclusion of 245 service members who passed away in circumstances unrelated to the Korean War, and the omission of 500 service members' names. In the article, it says that the National Park Service has deferred to the Defense Department about how names were chosen for the memorial. The Department of Defense encouraged any concerned citizens to let them know of errors and said they will work with the NPS to make the necessary corrections or additions. Source: *The New York Times*
- *Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail* - The park released its 2022 Annual Report, documenting the trail's work through partnerships over the course of the year. Highlights include updating waysides, an ethnobotany project, development of an award-winning junior ranger program, and utilizing panoramic mapping for over 814 miles of the historic route. Source: [Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail](#)
- *Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park* - The park has begun the initial stage of the Texas White House Rehabilitation Project, conducting site investigations and removing and replacing portions of exterior boards and siding. The design phase of the project will last through 2023. The project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act and the site investigations will be completed by the architectural firm of Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc. Source: [Lyndon B Johnson National Historical Park](#)
- *National Historic Preservation and Training Center* (NPS program) - Shepherd University published [an article](#) about the Historic Preservation Training Center, including a profile of Superintendent Moss Rudley and the president and CEO of Preservation Maryland, Nicholas Redding, who are both Shepherd alumni. Source: *Shepherd Magazine*
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - *KQED* published [a piece](#) about the history and current controversy over cattle ranching in the park. Source: *KQED*
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - On January 9, the park announced a concession contract application process to operate the Point Reyes Hostel at the former

Laguna Ranch. Proposals are due by April 7. Source: [Point Reyes National Seashore](#)

- *Richmond National Battlefield Park* - The park has loaned its bronze statue of Abraham and Tad Lincoln to the Valentine Museum for a temporary outdoor exhibition. The historic Tredegar campus, which is owned by New Market Corporation and leased by the NPS to host a visitor contact station, is currently being prepped for construction of an amphitheater, which necessitated the relocation of the statue. The NPS and its partners are exploring options for a new permanent location for the statue. Source: [Richmond National Battlefield Park](#)
- *Sagamore Hill National Historic Site* - The National Park Service Arborist Incident Response Team will trim and likely remove two historic late-1800s-era trees, an American elm and silver maple, from the property because they current present a potential fall hazard to the Theodore Roosevelt Home. Both trees have Dutch elm disease and the park worked for many years to slow the progression of the disease. Both trees will be replaced with disease-resistant varieties of the same species. Source: [Sagamore Hill National Historic Site](#)
- *Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* - The National Wildlife Federation will host a celebration of life for the famous mountain lion, P-22, who was recently euthanized after attacking a dog and exhibiting extremely poor health. The celebration will take place on February 4 at the Greek Theatre in Los Angeles. Tickets are free, but reservations are required. Source: [TimeOut](#)
- *Theodore Roosevelt National Park* - *The Bismark Tribune* published [a staff editorial](#) arguing against the park's proposal to remove all wild horses from the park through a phased reduction (see "Open for Public Comment" below). The editorial argues that the herd should be reduced, but not removed entirely because the horses are an attraction for visitors, a small herd poses little threat to native species, and the horses remind visitors of Western heritage. Source: *The Bismark Tribune*
- *Wild and Scenic Rivers Program* - The Little Manatee River (FL) will undergo an NPS study for possible inclusion as a Wild and Scenic River, per a measure signed into law in the omnibus spending bill. The study could take as long as three years. Source: [Tampa Bay Times](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - The Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System has received \$3.68 million from the 2023 omnibus spending package to replace four of its fleet buses. The new buses will be "clean-diesel, over-the-road coach buses." YARTS is a California Joint Powers Authority comprised of Merced, Mariposa, Tuolumne, Madera, and Mono Counties, in partnership with the NPS, Federal Highway Administration, Caltrans, and the U.S. Forest Service. Source: [Sierra News Online](#)

## Personnel Changes

- *Cape Lookout National Seashore* - Nate Toering has been selected as the new chief of interpretation and education. Nate has worked at several national park units, most recently as the lead park ranger and volunteer coordinator at Cape Lookout. Source: [Cape Lookout National Seashore](#)
- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - David Smith has been selected as the new superintendent. David has 31 years of NPS experience, most recently as the superintendent at Joshua Tree since 2014. Source: [National Park Service Regions 8, 9, 10, and 12 \(Pacific West Region\)](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - Joshua Johnson has been selected as the new lands specialist. Josh has a background as a licensed real estate agent and Geographic Information Systems specialist, and has been working at the park as a contractor since 2021. Josh was hired permanently in November. Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - Christa Johnston has been selected as the new chief of staff. Christa has worked in many public agency positions, most recently as the acting public affairs officer at the park since February 2022. She began her new role on January 3. Source: [Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)
- *Wildland Fire Program* - Russ Babiak has been selected as the new wildland fire training program manager at the National Interagency Fire Center. Russ has 28 years of federal fire experience, most recently as the fire management officer for the Boise District of the Bureau of Land Management. Source: [National Park Service Wildland Fire Program](#)

## 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

- James "Bud" Ambrose Carter, 99, passed away on December 31. Bud was formerly a maintenance employee at Blue Ridge Parkway. Source: [Legacy/Roanoke Times](#), Phil Francis
- Robert "Bob" F. Gift, 92, passed away on January 3. Bob worked for the National Park Service, part of that time as the environmental coordinator and as the regional director of the Mid-Atlantic Region. Source: [The Standard-Journal](#), [Courier National Park Service Newsletter](#) (May 1986), [Justia U.S. Law](#) (1999)
- Steve Hawkins, 58, passed away on December 23. Steve previously had been a paramedic in Yellowstone National Park. Source: [Yankton Daily Press and Dakotan](#)

- Terry Maddox, 73, passed away on December 21. Terry was the executive director of the Great Smoky Mountains Association for over 25 years before his retirement in 2015. Source: [Great Smoky Mountains Association Facebook page](#)
- James A. Patty, 90, passed away on December 27. James worked for the NPS at Great Smoky Mountains National Park until his retirement. Source: [Legacy/The Daily Times](#)
- Lyle Ruterbories, 102, passed away on December 13. Lyle volunteered and then worked at Glacier National Park from 1987 until 2017, when he retired at the age of 97. Source: [Daily Inter Lake](#)
- Eldon Reyer, 89, passed away on December 26. Eldon worked for the NPS for 27 years, including at Yellowstone, Big Bend, Carlsbad Caverns, Grand Canyon Canyonlands, Arches, Denali, Glen Canyon/Rainbow Bridge, Battle of the Little Bighorn, and the Southwest Regional Office. Source: Rick Smith
- Frank Parker Weed, 85, passed away on December 2. Frank worked for the NPS Western Office of Design and Construction, starting in the mid-60s, then followed the WODC's transition to the Denver Service Center, where he worked until his retirement in 2003. He was also the senior radio facilities manager for the NPS. Source: [Dignity Memorial](#), Steve Hastings

### **In the News**

- Dwight Pitcaithley will be honored into the City of Carlsbad, New Mexico's Hall of Fame on January 28. Dwight was formerly the chief historian for the National Park Service and is an author and subject matter expert on the Civil War. Source: [Carlsbad Current Argus](#)
- The *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* ran [a profile piece](#) on the career of recently-retired Yellowstone National Park wildlife biologist Doug Smith. Doug oversaw the reintroduction of gray wolves to the park, as well as other wildlife projects in the park. Source: *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*

### **Retired**

- Jeanne Williams has retired as the Executive Director of the Feeder Canal Alliance after 16 years with the organization. Jeanne helped the Feeder Canal Towpath Trail gain its status as a National Recreational Trail and was awarded the Trail Tender Award by New York State Canal Corp in 2021. Source: [The Post-Star](#)

### **Open for Comment**

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

- *National Park Service* - Public comment is [open until February 3](#) on the agency's



National Long Range Transportation Plan, including climate and resource protection, increasing equitable access, and long-term road investments. Source: [Sierra Sun Times](#)

- *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 allows specific sport hunting practices, including bear baiting across the state of Alaska and this regulation would only apply to national preserves. Source: [National Park Service Alaska Region](#)
- *Big Bend National Park* - Public comment is [open until January 15](#) on a proposed special use permit from a commercial enterprise to build a communication tower in the Panther Junction area. Source: [Big Bend National Park](#)
- *Big Cypress National Preserve, Everglades National Park* - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District is hosting a virtual listening session for the Western Everglades Restoration Project on January 17. The meeting will focus on the Wingate Mill Stormwater Treatment Area. Source: [Big Cypress National Preserve](#)
- *Boston National Historical Park* - Public comment is [open until February 6](#) on a proposal to construct a consolidated "Gateway Center" that would house the USS Constitution Museum and visitor center at the entrance to Charlestown Navy Yard. Building 109 on Pier 1 would also be replaced with an open frame structure for visitor orientation and programming. Source: [Boston National Historical Park](#)
- *Haleakalā National Park* - Public comment is [open until January 23](#) on a plan to suppress invasive mosquitos in order to reduce transmission of avian malaria to threatened and endangered birds. Source: [Hawaii News Now](#)
- *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](#)
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - Public comment has been [extended until January 22](#) for management options on how to maintain launch ramp access to the lake and other visitor services amid record low lake levels that continue to drop. Source: [Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#), [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#)
- *Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve* - Public comment is [open until January 16](#) on a fire management plan. Source: [Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve](#)
- *Rock Creek Park* - Public comment will be [open from January 18 to February 16](#) on a Piney Branch water quality improvement project that includes a sewer overflow

- storage tunnel and diversion structure for runoff. Source: [Washington City Paper](#)
- *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](#)
  - *Rocky Mountain National Park* - Public comment is [open until February 1](#) on a Day Use Visitor Access Strategy. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
  - *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - Public comment is [open until January 17](#) on a Visitor Experience and Access planning process. Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#)
  - *Theodore Roosevelt National Park* - Public comment is [open until January 31](#) on a Livestock Plan. Source: [Theodore Roosevelt National Park](#)
  - *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](#)
  - *Yosemite National Park* - Public comment is [open until February 3](#) on a Visitor Access Management Plan. Source: [Sierra Sun Times](#)
  - *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**

- *Habitat connectivity on BLM lands* - On November 15, the Bureau of Land Management announced a new policy that calls for BLM state offices to better assess and protect areas of habitat connectivity. Source: [Bureau of Land Management](#)
- *Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool* - On November 22, the White House Council on Environmental Quality launched the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, which will allow federal agencies to identify disadvantaged

communities for the Justice40 Initiative, which seeks to deliver 40% of federal benefits focused on sustainability efforts to communities historically marginalized economically and/or environmentally. Source: [The White House](#)

- *Tribal water rights settlements* - At the closing of the 117th Congress, the Hualapai Tribe Water Rights Settlement Act of 2022 was enacted, providing water and a \$312 million trust fund to develop water infrastructure, the White Mountain Apache Tribe Water Rights Quantification Act of 2010 was modified to allow for changes to infrastructure design and provide additional funding, and the Colorado River Indian Tribes Water Resiliency Act of 2022 was passed to allow Tribes on the Colorado River to lease, exchange, store, or conserve parts of their water rights to off-Reservation users. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Orphaned Wells Office created* - On January 10, the Department of the Interior established an Orphaned Wells Program Office to ensure effective implementation of recent investments in plugging orphaned wells across the country. The office will be led by Director Kimbra Davis, who has been at the DOI since 2009. 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, legislative and Congressional affairs for the National Park Service.*

### **New Public Laws**

*Editor Note: Some of the bills noted below were just signed by the president right before press time, but had not yet been assigned public law numbers by the National Archives and Records Administration. The assigned public law numbers currently read "TBD" and will be confirmed in the next Coalition Report.*

**December 21, 2022** – The president signed into law H.R. 2930, to enhance protections of Native American tangible cultural heritage (P.L. 117–258).

**December 23, 2022** – The president signed into law:

- H.R. 7776, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2023 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year (P.L. 117-263). See the [Coalition Report of December 14](#) (House Action of December 8 on H.R. 7776) for the provisions that affect the National Park Service.
- H.R. 4373, to provide further continuing appropriations for FY 2023. The bill provides continuing appropriations for all federal agencies, including the National Park Service, through December 30, 2022 (P.L. 117-264).

**December 29, 2022** – The president signed into law H.R. 2617, making consolidated

appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2023, and for providing emergency assistance for the situation in Ukraine. The bill includes funding for the National Park Service for FY2023. Signed on December 29, 2022. (P.L. 117-328). See the [Coalition Report of December 28](#) (Senate Action of December 22 on H.R. 2617) for the provisions that affect the National Park Service.

**January 5, 2023** – The president signed into law:

- H.R. 1154, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating certain land as the Great Dismal Swamp National Heritage Area (P.L. 117-*TBD*).
- S. 1942, to standardize the designation of National Heritage Areas. See the [Coalition Report of December 28](#) (Senate Action of December 20 on S. 1942) for the provisions that affect the National Park Service. (P.L. 117-*TBD*).
- S. 3519, to amend the National Trails System Act to designate the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail (P.L. 117-*TBD*).
- S. 4949, to amend title 38, U.S. Code, to address green burial sections in national cemeteries (P.L. 117-*TBD*).

### **Senate Actions**

**December 21, 2022** – The Senate confirmed the nomination of Sara C. Bronin, of Connecticut, to be Chairman of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation for a term expiring January 19, 2025.

**January 3, 2023** – The Second Session of the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress adjourned at 11:30 a.m., and the First Session of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress convened at noon.

### **House Actions**

**January 3, 2023** – The Second Session of the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress adjourned at 11:57 a.m., and the First Session of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress convened at noon.

### **Incidents**

*Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.*

#### **Anacostia Park**

##### **Tires dumped**

On December 22, the Ward 8 Woods Conservancy found a pile of hundreds of tires that had been illegally dumped in the northern section of the park under an elevated portion of I-295. The National Park Service is organizing a cleanup and have stated that they will be removed by the end of January. The NPS is also working with Park Police and

Metropolitan Police Department to investigate the dumping. Source: [WUSA9](#)

### **Big Thicket National Preserve**

#### **Non-native deer introduction**

Axis deer, also known as chitals, have been unexpectedly introduced into the park. Axis deer are native to India and were introduced into Texas in 1932. Over 15,000 individuals roam the central and southern part of the state. They can outcompete native white-tailed deer for habitat and food. The park is allowing any hunters with a Big Sandy Creek Unit hunting permit to take axis deer with no limit. Source: [Big Thicket National Preserve](#), [Texas Tech University Natural Science Research Laboratory](#)

### **Cape Lookout National Seashore**

#### **Dock damaged**

The Cape Lookout Lighthouse dock was damaged by the freezing winter storm that hit in late December. Currently, the dock is not fit for public safety and is closed until it can be repaired. Island Express Ferry Service will suspend services out of Harkers Island for the month of January or until a solution can be found. Source: [WITN](#)

### **Dry Tortugas National Park**

#### **Refugees land at park**

Between December 30 and January 2, the Homeland Security Task Force - Southeast has interdicted or encountered over 300 Cuban and Haitian refugees in the park. Additionally, over 1,000 other refugees have been encountered in the surrounding area, including the Florida Keys, U.S. Virgin Islands, and at sea. The park was temporarily closed to allow law enforcement and medical personnel to evaluate migrants before they were transported. The migrants at Dry Tortugas were transported in a joint effort by the NPS and Homeland Security onboard the *USCG Cutter Maple*, a 225' buoy tender, and transferred to Key West on January 5. They were then transported to U.S. border patrol stations for processing. The park reopened on January 8. Source: [WGCU \(1/5, 1/6\)](#), [USA Today](#)

### **Gateway Arch National Park**

#### **Guilty plea for officer assault**

On February 28, 2021, law enforcement rangers made a traffic stop of a vehicle in the Old Cathedral parking lot. An open beer bottle and open beer carton were observed in the vehicle. The individual gave their name to the officers, but refused to provide identification and did not keep hands on the steering wheel, as advised. The individual became "confrontational" and admitted to consuming alcohol. When rangers tried to handcuff the individual, they struggled, and resisted, including kicking rangers multiple times. Later, during a struggle in jail, the individual grabbed a different ranger by the throat. On December 19, 2022, the individual pleaded guilty to two counts of assaulting an officer. They will face sentencing on March 23, 2023. Source: [United States Attorney's Office:](#)

## [Eastern District of Missouri](#)

### **Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Redwood National and State Parks, Yosemite National Park, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks**

#### **Atmospheric river event**

On January 4, many public lands managers preemptively closed due to the prediction of an atmospheric-river event likely to bring flooding and the potential for power outages. As of January 9, many parts of Golden Gate, Redwood, and Sequoia remain closed due to the impacts of winter storms and further incoming weather. Source: [Outside, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Redwood National and State Parks, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#)

### **Golden Gate National Recreation Area**

#### **Hikers stranded by high tide**

On December 24, two hikers climbed down a cliff in the Marin Headlands before they became stuck on the beach when the tide started to rise. California Highway Patrol's H-30 helicopter responded, extricating them via long line, then lowering them to the ground. El Cerrito Fire Department, Marin County Fire Department, Southern Marin Fire District, and the NPS were also on scene to support the rescue. Source: [KRON4](#)

### **Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument**

#### **Motorists stranded in mud**

On December 28, a 19-year-old and 20-year-old drove into the monument in a Hyundai Santa Fe SUV, "in search of the Grand Canyon." The car became stuck in deep mud and there is little to no cell phone signal on much of the monument. They had asked a friend to notify law enforcement if they were not heard from for over 48 hours. On December 31, a search was initiated by the Mohave County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue, Bureau of Land Management, Arizona Game and Fish, NPS, and the Western Air Rescue DPS Helicopter out of Kingman, Arizona. The helicopter was unable to fly in the morning due to rain and low-lying clouds. NPS rangers located the SUV that afternoon, and the helicopter was able to make it to their location for a medical evaluation. Search teams were then able to safely extricate the individuals. Source: [The Buzz/The Bee News, Mohave County Sherrif's Office Search and Rescue Facebook page](#)

### **Great Smoky Mountains National Park**

#### **Habituated bear travels 1,000 miles**

In summer 2022, a black bear called "Number 609," was observed eating food off picnic tables, stealing backpacks, and sniffing trash cans in the park. The individual was taken to the South Cherokee National Forest in Polk County and outfitted with a GPS collar. The bear traveled 1,000 miles across three states and Interstate 40, including getting hit by a car, before returning to the park six months later. It is the longest distance the park has

tracked a relocated bear in its 40-year study. Source: [WBIR](#)

## **Guadalupe Mountains National Park**

### **Hiker found deceased**

On January 31, the NPS was notified of an unresponsive hiker on the Guadalupe Peak Trail. Bystanders administered CPR, but it was unsuccessful. The cause of death was not reported, though the NPS noted that visitors should exhibit caution when traveling in windy and cold conditions. Source: [KTSM](#)

## **Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park**

### **Kīlauea erupts again**

On January 5, Kīlauea began erupting inside its summit crater, Halemauau. It has been a little under a month since the volcano and neighboring volcano Mauna Loa stopped erupting most recently. The U.S. Geological Survey raised the alert level earlier in the day because there were signs of magma rising that indicated it might erupt. The Hawaiian Volcano Observatory continues to monitor both volcanoes for further activity. Source: [Nation World News](#)

## **Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park**

### **Visitor urinates at volcano viewing site**

On January 7, a picture was posted on social media, showing a person urinating at a Kīlauea eruption viewing area in the park. The post received heavy backlash, and the individual tagged in the photo deactivated their social media account. The park made a statement that said, "Not only does it seem to depict the improper disposal of human waste in a developed area, which is in violation of Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations, but it also demonstrates a lack of understanding and disregard for the cultural significance of Kīlauea." Source: [Hawaii News Now](#)

## **Independence National Historical Park**

### **Arson**

On December 24, an officer on foot patrol discovered a fire engulfing the basement of Carpenters' Hall. The fire was contained in about 30 minutes and did not cause significant damage to the upper floors of the building, but the fire did destroy archives in the basement. Most of the archives stored in the basement were 20th century records. Arson is suspected, and an exterior entrance to the basement had its lock broken off. The NPS is asking for any information the public can provide. Carpenters' Hall had been closed to the public for a preservation project and was scheduled to reopen in February, but that date has now been pushed back indefinitely. Source: [CBS Philadelphia](#), [Penn Live Patriot-News](#)

## **Joshua Tree National Park**

## **Two separate hiking fatalities**

On January 2, on the Lost Palms Oasis Trail, an individual's "heart stopped, possibly from a heart attack." CPR was initiated by friends and family and the patient was transported out of the park, but they passed away. Source: [Desert Sun](#)

On January 7, a 50-year-old hiker was reported injured in the Rattlesnake Canyon area. The NPS and local sheriffs responded, including the dispatch of two helicopters to the area. A Sheriff's helicopter located the missing hiker and directed NPS, County Fire, and Morongo Basin Ambulance staff to the location. The individual had suffered serious injuries from a fall, including head trauma. There were no signs of foul play. The individual was extricated out of the steep, rocky terrain, then brought to the medical helicopter and transported to an area hospital. The individual was later declared deceased at the hospital. Source: [Z107.7 News](#), [Desert Sun](#)

## **Lake Meredith National Recreation Area Property theft suspect apprehended**

On January 1, a 40-year-old was arrested for suspected involvement in "the majority of burglaries in the Fritch area." The Hutchinson County Sheriff's Office SWAT team, Fritch Police Department, and NPS served a search warrant for stolen property in the Lake Meredith Harbor area and found the suspect hiding in nearby bushes. The individual was arrested on multiple counts of theft of property. Source: [ABC7 Amarillo](#)

## **Shenandoah National Park Storm damage**

The park was hit by back-to-back winter storm systems on December 15 and December 22, leaving Skyline Drive closed for damage assessments and debris removal. As of January 6, parts of Skyline Drive had been reopened, while others remained closed. Source: [Culpeper Star-Exponent](#)

## **Yellowstone National Park (just outside park boundaries) Truck kills bison**

On December 28 after dark, a semi-truck hit a herd of bison on Highway 191 just outside the park, north of West Yellowstone. Two other vehicles were also involved. 13 bison were killed or had to be euthanized due to the severity of their injuries. The accident is under investigation. Source: [ABC News](#)

## **Yosemite National Park Rockfall kills two**

On December 27, two individuals were killed in a rockfall event on Highway 140 near the entrance station. The rocks fell roughly 1,000 feet into their rented Dodge Ram truck,



knocking the vehicle down onto the embankment of the Merced River. About 185 tons of rock fell, affecting 500 feet of roadway. The road was closed following the slide and then reopened the following day. Source: [CBS News](#), [CNN](#), [KRON4](#)

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

- *Canaveral National Seashore* - Playalinda Beach reopened on January 3. The beach and dune area were severely impacted by Hurricanes Ian and Nicole and have been closed since mid-November. The cleanup and restoration efforts are ongoing, with half of the seashore still closed. Some parking areas also remain closed. Source: [Canaveral National Seashore](#)
- *Shenandoah National Park* - Human remains were found on January 2 in the southern part of the park near the location of a vehicle for a 66-year-old missing person. The remains are suspected to belong to the missing individual, though positive identification and cause of death are still pending from the Office of the Medical Examiner in Augusta County. The individual had been reported missing on December 12 and their car was found at the Turk Mountain parking area three days later. The individual had filed a backcountry permit for a seven-night trip from that trailhead in September. Source: [Shenandoah National Park](#)

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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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