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The Coalition Report

Wednesday, January 25, 2023

Coalition Actions

Coalition Chair Mike Murray was quoted in a *Daily Beast* [article](#) on Air Tour Management Plans. In the article, he outlined the Coalition's concerns with the overall planning process and the approach of the NPS and Federal Aviation Administration.

Mike was also quoted in a *National Parks Traveler* [article](#) on a petition from the Native Organizers Alliance to "re-indigenize national parks." In the article, he recognized the importance of co-stewardship and acknowledged that decision makers at all levels need to do more work to define what that looks like.

The Coalition joined ten organizations in signing a [letter](#) to the Wyoming Bureau of Land Management office, providing extensive scoping comments on parcels under consideration for the BLM's third quarter oil and gas lease sale.

Thanks to everyone who supported our year-end fundraising campaign. We've got a lot in the hopper for 2023, so if you haven't made a gift and would like to, [here's your opportunity!](#)

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.

- *Park Science Winter edition* - On December 30, the National Park Service published [Volume 36, Number 2 of Park Science](#) magazine. Subjects include sea level rise

and its effects on cultural sites at Everglades, the sampling of historic mortar at various parks by the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, the role of Denali's sled dogs in collecting snow depth data, historic bison remains found in Glacier, bird tracking at Fort Union, and many others. Source: *The Green and Gray Report*, Volume VI, Issue 20

- *State of the NPS Advisory Board - Parks Stewardship Forum* published [an op-ed](#) by Rolf Diamant arguing for the return of the National Park System Advisory Board, which has been defunct since 2018. Source: *eScholarship/Parks Stewardship Forum*
- *Efforts at diversifying outdoor recreation - KUER* published [an interview](#) with Teresa Baker, co-founder of the Outdoor CEO Diversity Pledge, in which she discussed the push to increase staff diversity in retail brands, inclusion in the outdoors, and marketing. Source: *KUER*
- *Sierra Club's "Monument Wish List" - Sierra* published [an article](#) with the top four places the Sierra Club believes should be designated as national monuments: Springfield Race Riot Memorial, Tulsa Race Massacre Memorial, Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley Memorial, and Stone Mountain. Source: *Sierra*
- *Americans like the NPS* - A poll conducted by *YouGov* found that 41% of Americans view the NPS very favorably, and 34% somewhat favorably. Only 4% had a somewhat unfavorable opinion, and 2% had a very unfavorable opinion. The NPS was viewed more favorably than most other government agencies and fared similarly to branches of the military. The poll also broke numbers down by education, race, and age. Source: [YouGovAmerica](#)
- *Privatization of public land management - The Daily Sentinel* published [an op-ed](#) by Greg Walcher, president of the Natural Resources Group, arguing that the "federal estate" of 640 million acres is too large and inefficient to be effective. The op-ed considers whether private management, not ownership, might benefit public lands. Source: *The Daily Sentinel*
- *"U.S. National Park Index" - Travel Lens*, has created a "U.S. National Park Index" that attempts to rate the "best national parks" ("national park" in name only, not all units of the National Park System). Their metrics include park size, number of visitors, entrance fee, distance to the closest city, and percentage of *Tripadvisor* or *Yelp* reviews that mention the word "beautiful." Their index's top five parks are Great Smoky Mountains, Cuyahoga Valley, Olympic, Biscayne, and Hot Springs. Source: [Travel Lens](#)

Around the Parks

Park reports are in alphabetical order.

- *Acadia National Park* - The NPS has awarded a \$7.8 million contract to Harold MacQuinn, Inc. of Hancock, Maine to rehabilitate the water and wastewater distribution systems in the Schoodic District. The project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. It was not announced when the project will begin. Facilities will remain open during the project. Source: [Acadia National Park](#)
- *Antietam National Battlefield* - The Greater Hagerstown Committee, Washington County (MD) Chamber of Commerce, and Visit Hagerstown have come together to create an online petition to ask the NPS to bring back the Maryland Symphony Orchestra's "Salute to Independence" concert during Fourth of July weekend. The concert was held for many years before the pandemic. The NPS made a public statement saying that the event cannot be held at the battlefield this summer due to ongoing work to renovate the visitor center. The concert will take place at the Alumni Association Amphitheater at Hagerstown Community College, where it has been held the last two summers. Source: [The Herald-Mail](#)
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - The park has opened up a Commercial Use Authorization process for vendors to sell firewood at Otter Creek, Rocky Knob, and Doughton Park Campgrounds from May through October. Source: [WSET](#)
- *Cane River Creole National Historical Park* - The park, in collaboration with the Cane River National Heritage Area and the City of Natchitoches, is hosting a student essay contest to rename the street on which the historic Texas and Pacific Railway Depot resides. The Depot is being rehabilitated to include an interpretive center, theater, and community room space, as well as park offices. The contest stipulates that the proposed name should reflect the area's heritage, history, and culture. Source: [Cane River Creole National Historical Park](#)
- *Cape Cod National Seashore* - The park has begun removing dead trees and shrubbery in the Duck Harbor area of the Herring River in Wellfleet to promote the recovery of native salt marsh vegetation. After the Herring River was diked in 1909, freshwater trees and plants entered the area, and recent high tides have created a massive die-off of those species. After removing the vegetation, salt marsh plants will be able to recover. The project is being managed by Ducks Unlimited with a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The park will continue monitoring the area with the Center for Coastal Studies. Source: [Cape Cod National Seashore](#)
- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - On January 18, a Dare County (NC) town hall meeting about erosion and beach nourishment drew over 100 people in-person and 160 people online. The county outlined the history of local beach nourishment and related taxes and stated that there is not enough funding currently to support further efforts. Park staff were present and expressed that it has applied for funding to support "transportation vulnerabilities," but it was unclear whether or not funding would come through. Source: [The Coastland Times](#)

- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Fort Raleigh National Historic Site* - The two parks have opened up government contract bid processes for a variety of services, including constructing RV sites and utilities on Ocracoke Island, painting parking stripes in the Oregon Inlet boat ramp parking lot, conducting market research for a multipurpose paved trail to the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse, and to improve footwells in the Waterside Theatre. Bids are due in late January and early February. Source: [WAVY](#)
- *Cape Lookout National Seashore* - The park has announced its Volunteers of the Year, a group of four individuals who replaced the interior framing, siding, and roof of the Cape Lookout Lighthouse Summer Kitchen: Tom Atkinson, Rich Rehm, Lawrence "Scotty" Scott, and Al Heltzel. The building will eventually be prepped as a living history museum, representing its use in 1917. Source: [Cape Lookout National Seashore](#)
- *Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park* - The park announced a new group of advisory commission members. Source: [Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park](#)
- *Chaco Culture National Historical Park* - The *Albuquerque Journal* published [an op-ed](#) by the Southwest Regional Advisory Council of the National Parks Conservation Association supporting the Department of the Interior's proposed 20-year-ban on oil and gas leasing in the surrounding lands of the park. Source: [Albuquerque Journal](#)
- *Cuyahoga Valley National Park* - The park closed on the purchase of 198 acres of the former Brandywine Golf Course property from the Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park on December 28, 2022. 15 acres will be kept for programming, special events, and other "riverfront initiatives." Remediation on the rest of the property will begin this year, in collaboration between the park and HZW Environmental Consultants, with grant funding from the Ohio Department of Development. The property will remain closed to the public throughout this work. Source: [WKYC](#)
- *Cuyahoga Valley National Park* - A new movie starring actor Tom Hanks, "A Man Called Otto," includes scenes filmed in the park. Source: [Akron Beacon Journal](#)
- *Death Valley National Park* - A record number of Devils Hole pupfish newborns were recorded in December and January. The fish has been listed as an endangered species since 1967. Source: [8NewsNow](#)
- *Denali National Park and Preserve* - A \$102 million contract has been signed with Granite Construction to build a suspension bridge over the Pretty Rocks landslide. The road has been closed to the public at the slide since August 2021. The landslide is ongoing due to warming conditions that have thawed soils. The

construction will begin in May 2023 and visitors are expected to be able to drive the full road by Summer 2025. The funding for the project comes from the recently passed omnibus budget bill and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Source: [Alaska Beacon](#)

- *Denali National Park and Preserve, Grand Teton National Park, Voyageurs National Park, Yellowstone National Park, Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve* - New research conducted in these five parks and published in *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* showed that human-caused wolf mortality triggers pack instability. Packs were 27% less likely to stay together after a pack member died of human causes, and had 22% less offspring the following year. In the case where the pack leader died, they were 73% less likely to stay together and reproduction dropped by 49%. Source: [University of Minnesota News and Events](#)
- *Fort Monroe National Monument* - The Fort Monroe Authority, a "political subdivision" that oversees development at the fort, is advocating for a Virginia House of Delegates bill that would exempt them from complying with the Freedom of Information Act when it comes to "trade secrets, proprietary information or financial information" for commercial or residential leasing. Source: [yahoo!sports/Daily Press](#)
- *Frederick Douglass National Historic Site* - The park approved Maryland Governor Wes Moore's request to be sworn in as governor on Frederick Douglass' Bible, accompanied by his grandfather's Bible. Source: [CBS Baltimore](#)
- *Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve* - The *Anchorage Daily News* published [an op-ed](#) by Shield Downey, the first chief of the Native Village of Ambler and chair of the Kobuk Subsistence Resource Commission, arguing against the proposed Ambler Road. In the op-ed, Shield argues that the road will bring "an end to our culture." The *Anchorage Daily News* also published [an op-ed](#) by Dick Hensel, a retired U.S. Fish and Wildlife and NPS biologist, arguing for alternative extraction methods due to the heavy environmental and social impacts of the proposed road. Source: *Anchorage Daily News*
- *Gateway Arch National Park* - On January 12, former NPS Director Robert Stanton, in his role as the scholar in residence at the College of Education for the University of Missouri-St. Louis, spoke about the National Park Service mission, the agency's missteps, and opportunities to learn and grow. The event was held at the park visitor center and sponsored by the university, the NPS, and the Jefferson National Parks Association. Source: [University of Missouri-St. Louis Daily](#)
- *Gettysburg National Military Park* - For the first time, the park, in collaboration with the Gettysburg Foundation, will host a sensory friendly morning at the park's museum and visitor center. The goal is to allow free access to the exhibits with no narration, sound effects, or flashing lights, as well as the availability of "Hands on

History" carts with touch and feel reproduction objects from the park's collection. The event is intended to help visitors on the autism spectrum, those with PTSD, or visitors who desire a more relaxed experience. Source: [Gettysburg National Military Park](#)

- *Gettysburg National Military Park* - The park is working to protect the Klingel House from rot by bracing the walls, inside and out, and by wrapping the outside of the building. The park hopes to restore the building within five years, which is the lifespan of the bracing. Source: [WGAL](#)
- *Gettysburg National Military Park* - The park has issued a Request for Proposals for individuals or businesses to run short-term vacation rentals at four historic buildings at the park through their Historic Leasing Program. Proposals are due by March 27. Source: [Local21News](#)
- *Gettysburg National Military Park* - The park has removed a non-historic shed adjacent to the historic Wisler House and is doing tree removal at the site. Park staff are working to restore the house to its 1863 appearance. They will soon add a small gravel parking lot to the northeast corner of the property, and the site will reopen for public visitation this spring. Source: [WHTM](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - On January 18, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced the completion of a recovery plan for the endangered meltwater lednian stonefly and western glacier stonefly. The two species are among the first to gain protection as a result of climate change. The two are dependent on the melt waters of glaciers and snowfields in Glacier National Park. Source: [The Flathead Beacon](#)
- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Muir Woods National Monument, Point Reyes National Seashore, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park* - On January 11, the NPS and Federal Aviation Administration completed a combined air tour management plan for the four parks. The number of air tours for each park was established based on the average number of air tours reported between 2017-2019. Source: [Golden Gate National Recreation Area](#)
- *Isle Royale National Park* - The park signed a Finding of No Significant Impact for their Cultural Resource Management Plan. Source: [Isle Royale National Park](#)
- *Keweenaw National Historical Park* - The park's advisory commission has opened up the 2023 Keweenaw Heritage Grant Program to preserve structures, landscapes, and stories related to Keweenaw's history. \$125,000 will be granted this year and applications are due on March 31. Source: [Keweenaw National Historical Park](#)
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - The park is working to modernize the fuel dock at Katherine Landing, including upgrades to fueling systems and 47 new

transient moorage slips for vessels. Dock-based fuel will not be available again until March 31, though land-based fuel will be. Source: [Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)

- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - Senator Jacky Rosen (D-NV) submitted a letter to the NPS, opposing its proposal to close boat launch ramps without future relocations, as stated in the Lake Mead National Recreation Area Sustainable Low Water Access Plan (see "Open for Comment" below). Source: [U.S. Senator Jacky Rosen](#)
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - The park has installed a "Mobi-mat" adaptive boat ramp at Callville Bay that will better allow boat launching on the unstable shoreline of the lake to keep the reservoir accessible for the public under record-low water levels. Source: [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#)
- *Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park* - *Capital B Atlanta* ran [a profile piece](#) on NPS ranger Marty Smith and his role interpreting the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King at the park. Source: *Capital B Atlanta*
- *Mount Rushmore National Memorial* - For the third year in a row, the NPS has denied South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem's application for a permit to hold a fireworks show at Mount Rushmore to celebrate Independence Day. Noem had previously sued the Department of the Interior over the 2021 denial, and federal appeals courts found that the federal government was within its rights to deny the permit. Source: [NewsCenter1](#)
- *Muir Woods National Monument* - *National Parks Traveler* published [an article](#) about the surprise appearance of Chinook salmon in Redwood Creek in Fall 2021. Chinook typically prefer larger waterways. The article also documents the various efforts at rehabilitating Californian salmon populations, both at the park and elsewhere. Source: *National Parks Traveler*
- *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Program* (NPS-administered program) - *ProPublica* published [an article](#) about 100,000+ Native American remains that are in the possession of federally-funded museums and institutions, nationwide. The media outlet set up a searchable database that individuals can utilize to see which institutions still have remains needing to be repatriated. Source: *ProPublica*
- *New River Gorge National Park and Preserve* - A 45-acre parcel on Beury Mountain just east of the Thermond area has been added to the preserve. The property connects two previously non-contiguous sections and ensures that hunters and other visitors will be able to access the preserve. The tract purchase was included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2021, which redesignated New River Gorge from a national river to a national park and preserve. The park is

- working to establish suitable parking and to mark the boundary. Source: [New River Gorge National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Richmond National Battlefield Park* - A cemetery for Black Americans was recently re-discovered under overgrowth along Battlefield Park Road, adjacent to the park. The National Park Service supported the vegetation removal, reconsecration, and sign installation ceremony at the site. The cemetery may include Black Union soldiers who were killed in an attack on Fort Gilmer in September 1864. Source: [Martinsville Vulletin/Richmond Times-Dispatch](#)
 - *River Raisin National Battlefield Park* - On January 17, the Monroe City Council (MI) approved a \$1 million contract bid for improvements to the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system at the park's visitor center. The work will be done by Monroe Plumbing and Heating Company. Funding for the project comes from a state grant to the River Raisin National Battlefield Park Foundation and from the Monroe Building Authority. Work is expected to begin in late winter or early spring. Source: [The Monroe News](#)
 - *Rocky Mountain National Park* - Former Superintendent Vaughn Baker wrote [an op-ed](#) in *The Colorado Sun* in support of the park's timed entry system and acknowledged improvements that could still be made. Source: *The Colorado Sun*
 - *Saguaro National Park* - On January 25, a federal district court will hear arguments from a lawsuit filed by the Center for Biological Diversity, Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, Tucson Audubon Society, and Friends of Ironwood Forest against the Federal Highway Administration's approval of Interstate 11. The lawsuit argues that the environmental review for the highway was improperly conducted and that the 280-mile highway would disturb hundreds of archaeological sites and spread invasive grasses that will fuel wildfires. The highway would run between Saguaro National Park and Ironwood National Monument. Source: [Center for Biological Diversity](#)
 - *Saguaro National Park* - *Tucson.com* published [an article](#) highlighting the efforts of the park's trail crew, including a profile on Zak Beyersdoerfer, the park's assistant volunteer coordinator and trail crew member. Source: *Tucson.com*
 - *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - The *Los Angeles Times* published [an interview](#) with Daniel Selmi, an emeritus law professor at Loyola Law School, and author of *Dawn at Mineral King Valley: The Sierra Club, the Disney Company, and the Rise of Environmental Law*. The interview focused on the ways the Mineral King ski resort lawsuit of the 1970s changed the way environmental law is practiced in the U.S. Source: *Los Angeles Times*
 - *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - *SFGate* published [an article](#) about backcountry trail crews, including a profile of Tony Fiorino, the parks' trail

supervisor. Source: [SFGate](#)

- *Springfield Armory National Historic Site* - The Friends of Springfield Armory National Historic Site are in the process of completing the second phase of a restoration on four historic tower clocks in the Main Arsenal building. The second phase replaces the drive system for each clock face. The restoration is expected to be complete in Spring 2023. Source: [The Reminder](#)
- *Theodore Roosevelt National Park* - At a public meeting regarding the park's Livestock Plan, the NPS acknowledged that a legal review in the planning process revealed that the enabling legislation for the park does not allow it to maintain horses in the park to memorialize the open range ranching era, despite the park's efforts to do so since the 1970s. The park has received many comments against the removal of wild horses from the park (see [1/11/23 Coalition Report](#)). The comment period for the plan is still open (see "Open for Comment" below). Source: [InForum](#)
- *Voyageurs National Park* - The park has opened a Prospectus for a concession business of lodging, food and beverage, retail, marina, and other services at Kettle Falls. Proposals will be due on January 31. Source: [Voyageurs National Park](#)
- *Wind Cave National Park* - From January 17 to February 17, with the exception of weekends, the park will close the backcountry to all visitors in order to cull about 40 Rocky Mountain elk. These efforts are part of a long-term study with the U.S. Geological Survey to attempt to lessen the spread of chronic wasting disease through lower elk density. Each animal will be tested and those without chronic wasting disease will have their meat donated to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Source: [KOTA](#)

Personnel Changes

- *Pea Ridge National Military Park* - Shelley Todd has been selected as the new superintendent. Shelley has over 15 years of federal service, most recently as the head of the science and resource management division at Padre Island National Seashore. She will begin her new role in late February. Source: [Pea Ridge National Military Park](#)
- *Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site* - The park has hired several new staff: Danielle Stevens (administrative support assistant), Tim Jobe (interpreter/guide), Mario Medina (park guide), and Kate Bloom (position unnamed). Source: [Kiowa County Press](#)

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

- Helen Rita Morales Alfonso, 94, passed away on January 6. She was an employee of the NPS for many years. Source: [Legacy/The Times-Picayune](#)
- William "Biff" Baird III, 71, passed away on January 14. Biff spent summers during college working for a trail crew in Rocky Mountain National Park. He later worked as a ski patroller at Hidden Valley Ski Area in the park, then as an interpretive designer and the author of children's books about national parks. Source: [Estes Park News](#)
- Bill Gabbert, 75, passed away on January 14. Bill was the founder and editor of both *Fire Aviation* and *Wildfire Today*, and served as a wildland firefighter for 33 years - 13 of those with the NPS. Source: [Aerial Fire](#), [Pate-Jones Funeral Home](#)
- Al Heltzel passed away in December 2022. He is the only person to be awarded the Volunteer of the Year at Cape Lookout National Seashore twice - in 2018 and in 2022 (see above in "Around the Parks"). Source: [WITN](#)
- Penny Lynn (Ward) Knuckles, 71, passed away January 4. Penny worked for the NPS from 1972 to 2006, in interpretation, law enforcement, and resource management. She worked at Jewel Cave National Monument, Joshua Tree National Park, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, Rocky Mountain National Park, Big Cypress National Preserve, Katmai National Park and Preserve, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve, Denali National Park and Preserve, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, and Theodore Roosevelt National Park, where she retired as the chief of resource management. Source: Kathy Clossin/Valorie Naylor, Tom Haraden, [Custer County Chronicle](#)
- Mary Ann Potter passed away on January 10. She worked for a time as a registered nurse in Yosemite National Park. Source: [Legacy](#)
- Arthur Keith Shaver, 87, passed away on January 17. He worked at Yellowstone National Park for a time after high school. Source: [Legacy/Keloland](#)
- Jim Walters, 78, passed away on November 2. Jim worked for the NPS for 38 years. His duty stations included Joshua Tree National Park, Wupatki National Monument/Sunset Crater National Monument, Blue Ridge Parkway, Everglades National Park, Canyonlands National Park, Grand Canyon National Park, Carlsbad Caverns National Park/Guadalupe Mountains National Park, Capulin Volcano National Monument/Fort Union National Monument, and the Southwest Regional Office, where he retired as the chief of the Branch of Resource Operations in 2003. Source: Tony Bonanno

In the News

- Matt Folz was recently selected as the new director of parks and recreation for Hamilton County (TN). Matt worked for Xanterra Parks and Resorts for 14 years, including at Glacier National Park and Crater National Park. Source: [Chattanooga Times Free Press](#)
- The Natural Resources Defense Council published [a story](#) about their new chief policy impact officer, Christy Goldfuss, and her work around climate change. Christy was previously the deputy director of the National Park Service during the Obama administration. Source: National Resources Defense Council
- Edward Wright has been selected as the new area ranger for the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area (U.S. Forest Service). He previously worked for the NPS as a seasonal backcountry ranger. Source: [Smith County News and Messenger](#)

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 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](#)
- *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](#)
- *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](#)

- *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 was extended until January 22 on a Sustainable Low Water Access Plan. Source: [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#)
- *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](#)
- *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](#)
- *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](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - Public comment is [open until February 3](#) on a Visitor Access Management Plan. Source: [Sierra Sun Times](#)
- *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

- *Modernizing outer continental shelf processes* - On January 12, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management published a proposed rule to update regulations for clean energy development on the Outer Continental Shelf. The goal is to streamline bureaucracy, modernize regulations, and clarify ambiguity, allowing entities to more effectively deploy offshore wind facilities. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Offshore energy regulations moving agencies* - On January 17, the Department of the Interior announced that it is transferring regulations around workplace safety and environmental compliance from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement to allow more clarity and transparency for the offshore wind industry. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *New BOEM Director* - Elizabeth Klein has been named Director of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Groundbreaking on new transmission line* - On January 20, the Department of the Interior celebrated the groundbreaking of Ten West Link, a new 500kV high voltage transmission line connecting Southern California and Central Arizona. The transmission line is expected to harness solar photovoltaic energy from new energy projects in the region and will be operational by the end of 2023. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

Congressional Actions

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

117th Congress Summary

[A summary is now available](#) of the actions of the 117th Congress (2021-2023) that affect the National Park Service, prepared by Don Hellman.

New Public Laws

The president signed into law several bills that are of interest to the National Park Service on January 5, 2023. At the time of the last *Coalition Report*, those bills had not yet been assigned public law numbers by the National Archives and Records Administration. The assigned public law numbers are:

- 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. 117-331).
- S. 1942, to standardize the designation of National Heritage Areas. See the [Coalition Report of December 28, 2022](#) (Senate action of December 20 on S. 1942) for the provisions that affect the National Park Service. (P.L. 117-339).
- S. 3519, to amend the National Trails System Act to designate the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail (P.L. 117-345).
- S. 4949, to amend title 38, U.S. Code, to address green burial sections in national cemeteries (P.L. 117-355).

Senate Actions

The Senate was in recess.

House Actions

January 9, 2023 – The House took up and adopted a new rules package for the House of Representatives for the 118th Congress.

January 10 -12, 2023 – The House was in session; established a number of select committees, made committee assignments and introduced numerous public bills and resolutions. There were no committee meetings. The Speaker designated the period from Friday, January 13, 2023, through Monday, January 23, 2023, as a "district work period" under section 3(z) of House Resolution 5.

Incidents

Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.

Assateague Island National Seashore Dead whale washes ashore

On December 16, a 20-foot-long humpback whale was found deceased in the Maryland Oversand Vehicle Area. NPS staff contacted the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' Stranding Response Team, and in partnership with the National Aquarium, they conducted a necropsy. After the necropsy, they utilized heavy machinery to move the whale to the dunes area to dry before burying it. The death of the whale has caused U.S. Representative Andy Harris (R-MD) to call for an immediate moratorium on offshore windmill construction and related underwater geotechnical testing until it can be definitively proven that the testing and construction are not causing "repeated whale

deaths." There is fear that whales' ear structures are affected by sonar activity. It is unclear whether or not the moratorium will be considered. Source: [WBAL](#), [WBOC](#)

Buffalo National River

Visitor sentenced for officer assault

On June 24, 2021, after a citizen complaint, two NPS law enforcement rangers approached a 30-year-old who they believed was involved in a verbal domestic altercation with their partner at the Spring Creek Campground. The individual appeared to be under the influence of an unknown substance and refused to cooperate with questions. Due to the individual's erratic behavior and the statements of the other individual, the officers attempted to take the suspect into custody. They began to fight with the officers, and one NPS officer sustained an injury. The individual was arrested and transported to the Marion County Jail. The suspect attempted to escape while at the jail. The individual was recently sentenced to one year and one day in prison for the incidents. Source: [KY3](#)

Cape Hatteras National Seashore

Sea turtles rescued

31 green, five Kemp's riley, and one loggerhead sea turtle were found to be "cold-stunned" during the recent cold spell, and were transported by NPS staff and Network for Endangered Sea Turtles volunteers to the Sea Turtle Assistance and Rehabilitation Center at the North Carolina Aquarium for observation and medical attention. Sea turtles have difficulty moving to warmer water when they become cold-stunned, and can drown. Over 200 turtles have been rescued this winter. Source: [Island Free-Press](#)

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area

Storm damage

On January 9, the NPS closed the Whitewater Creek entrance road and parking lot for storm damage assessment and repairs. Source: [Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area](#)

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area

NPS staff missing

On January 5, a 46-year-old NPS staff member of Glen Canyon traveled to Las Vegas on personal time. The individual sent "concerning texts" to several people, and then failed to show up for work. The individual was last seen staying Red Rock Casino Resort and Spa in Las Vegas, Nevada and their phone last registered in Glendale, Nevada. NPS staff, the Bureau of Land Management, local county sheriffs departments, and the highway patrol from Nevada, Utah, and Arizona have conducted searches on all the routes from Las Vegas to Lees Ferry "by road and by air." Law enforcement are asking for any information the public may have. Source: [LocalToday](#)

Golden Gate National Recreation Area

WWII structure falls onto beach

On January 16, a World War II-era military observation post tumbled 200 feet from a saturated sand bluff onto the beach at Fort Funston. No one was injured in the incident. It will remain on the beach until further notice. Source: [Sacramento Bee](#)

Golden Gate National Recreation Area

Storms erode beaches and inundate parking

At Stinson Beach, recent storms and sea level rise have caused flooding and erosion of large amounts of sand from the beach. The NPS parking lot got inundated with sand, wooden debris, plastic, and crumbled asphalt and concrete, and is currently closed. There is no current estimated time of reopening. Source: [Marin Independent Journal](#)

Grand Teton National Park

Avalanche

On January 16, a snowboarder was caught in an avalanche on the west side of Albright Peak and swept 600 feet into Death Canyon, hitting several objects before coming to rest against a tree. A member of the injured person's party called 911 and provided location information. NPS staff and Teton County Search and Rescue responded, including a TCSAR helicopter. The rescue crew located the injured individual and determined the patient could walk a short distance to the helicopter. The patient and two uninjured members of their party were flown to a landing zone near the Teton Park Road, where they met a waiting ambulance. The helicopter returned for the remaining two rescuers and the fourth member of the patient's party. After further assessment by the ambulance crew, the patient refused additional medical care and self-transported to St. John's Hospital. Observation of the avalanche site showed the total avalanche ran 2,400 feet, was 300 feet wide, and varied from one to five feet deep. Avalanche danger had been forecast as "moderate." Source: [Grand Teton National Park](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Heavy snow

On January 13, a winter storm dropped 16 inches of snow on the higher elevations of the park, causing US 441/Newfound Gap Road to close for four days. NPS crews were able to clear the snow and reopen the road on January 17. Source: [WATE](#)

Gulf Islands National Seashore

Preemptive closure

On January 23, the park preemptively closed some of the park around Fort Pickens and Johnson Beach Road in preparation for winds up to 55 MPH and surf heights up to ten feet. The park will reopen when safe to do so. Source: [Gulf Islands National Seashore](#)

Haleakalā National Park

Hiker fall

On January 17, a 38-year-old took an "extreme fall" while hiking the Halemau'u trail. NPS staff and local fire staff, including a helicopter, responded. They were able to locate and transport the patient to Hosmer Grove, where paramedics and park EMTs provided additional treatment and then transported the individual to Maui Memorial Medical Center via Maui Medevac. Source: [The Maui News](#)

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

Visitor death

On January 15, a 70-year-old was at the Keanakakoi lava viewing overlook when they experienced a medical emergency. Bystanders called 911 and performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation until medics arrived. Medics performed further CPR, but the individual was pronounced dead and taken to the Hilo Medical Center. Source: [Hawaii News Now](#)

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

Art theft

On January 13, someone stole a replica of a traditional feather helmet from the Volcano House Hotel. The helmet was made by renowned artist Rick San Nicolas, and was displayed in a case near the front desk. Surveillance cameras captured images of two individuals in the lobby around the time of the theft. The park is looking for any information the public might have about the incident. Source: [KHON2](#)

Olympic National Park

Pre-emptive storm closures

On January 12, the park pre-emptively closed several campgrounds and roads due to incoming inclement weather, with potential flooding and treefall. They remained closed through January 15. Source: [The Leader](#)

Shiloh National Military Park

Bald eagles move in

A pair of bald eagles has taken up residence and built a nest in the main plaza area of the Shiloh Indian Mounds National Historic Landmark, close to Mound A. The Indian Mound Interpretive trail has been closed from Mound F through the plaza and to the footbridge east of Maternal Cluster wayside exhibit in order to protect the nest. Source: [Shiloh National Military Park](#)

Voyageurs National Park

Tasing incident

On June 25, 2022, an individual was allegedly tased by law enforcement at the park. A local news outlet, *The Timberjay*, filed a Freedom of Information Act request in August, seeking information about the incident. Five charges were made against the individual by the U.S. Attorney's office and were dismissed in late December. *The Timberjay* ran an editorial on January 11 accusing the National Park Service of possibly utilizing excessive force in the incident and for not providing any information or transparency regarding the incident, saying, "it looks an awful lot like a cover-up of law enforcement excess." In the editorial, they call on Minnesota Senators Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith to push for an investigation into the incident. Source: *The Timberjay* ([1/11](#), [12/21](#))

Yellowstone National Park

Viral post spreads misinformation

On January 9, the U.S. Geological Survey published an article about misinformation that spread through social media around December 25 after an individual made false claims that Yellowstone might be showing signs of volcanic unrest and that communities were being evacuated. The information was reshared widely and resulted in many concerned calls, emails, and social media queries to local law enforcement, the Yellowstone Volcano Observatory, and the National Park Service. A local county sheriff's office addressed the rumors directly with a public service announcement. Source: [Yellowstone Volcano Observatory \(U.S. Geological Survey\)](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Anacostia Park* - On January 17, the NPS began cleaning up hundreds of tires that had been discovered in December near the CSX railroad tracks under a Route 295 overpass in the park. The illegal dumping is under investigation and the park has asked for any information the public may have. Source: [WTOP](#)
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - The atmospheric river event caused significant amounts of damage in the park from flooding and landslides. The damage is being assessed in collaboration with the Federal Highway Administration and General Highway is closed past Hospital Rock Picnic Area. The South Fork Campground and nearby trails and roads were damaged and are currently closed. Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#), [National Parks Traveler](#)

Acknowledgments

This newsletter is supported through Coalition staff and invaluable volunteers:

- Editor: Katie Wallace
- Tech and Production Support: Steve Pittleman, Emily Thompson
- Regular Correspondent: Don Hellmann, Chris Soller

- Issue contributors: Tony Bonanno, Kathy Clossin, Phil Francis, Tom Haraden, 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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