



## The Coalition Report Wednesday, July 26, 2023

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### **Coalition Actions**

The Coalition turns 20 this year! As we reflect on our work and the continued importance of advocating on behalf of national parks, we are launching the [Coalition Legacy Fund](#). This new fund provides an opportunity for our members to leave a legacy gift through their wills or trusts. A gift to this fund will help ensure that our voices of experience will be there to protect and preserve our most precious places. Learn more [here](#) or [contact Executive Director Amy Gilbert](#).

The Coalition joined The Wilderness Society and Rocky Mountain Wild in submitting detailed [comments](#) to the Bureau of Land Management - Utah State Office on its fourth quarter oil and gas competitive lease sale Draft Environmental Assessment and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact. Among other things, the letter requests the Department of the Interior address the identified structural deficiencies in the leasing program and fully implement the leasing program reforms from the Inflation Reduction Act.

We joined with more than 125 organizations in signing a [letter](#) to the Bureau of Land Management supporting its Conservation and Landscape Health rulemaking and making seven recommendations to support restoration and protection of freshwater resources.

The Coalition joined with eight organizations on a [letter](#) to the Bureau of Land Management — Wyoming State Office, providing scoping comments for its 2024 first quarter competitive oil and gas lease sale.

We submitted [detailed comments](#) to the National Park Service on its Programmatic Environmental Assessment on the use of e-bikes within the National Park System.

The Coalition issued a [press release](#) thanking the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service for hosting a local hearing in Flagstaff, Arizona, on the proposed Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni National Monument.

### **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 Monument* - On July 25, President Joe Biden signed a proclamation designating Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley National Monument. The 1955 murder of Emmett Till galvanized the American civil rights movement. The new monument will include five acres over three sites, and will be managed by the National Park Service. Source: [National Public Radio](#)
- *\$185 million in wildfire mitigation* — The Department of the Interior announced \$185 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for wildfire mitigation and resilience efforts, including special pay supplements for firefighters, increased training opportunities, collaborative fuels management, and burn area rehabilitation. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$10 million in 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary grants* — The NPS has awarded \$10 million for 20 cultural resource projects in 14 states in its second round of funding in the Sesquicentennial Grant Program, which is administered by the Historic Preservation Fund. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Finger Lakes NHA study* — On July 18, the NPS submitted the Finger Lakes National Heritage Area Feasibility Study to Congress, which evaluated a 14-county area in New York for inclusion in the NHA system. The study found that the area is eligible for inclusion due to its "distinctive landscape with unique physical, historic, and cultural connections" that make it a "nationally important area." Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Federal appeals court affirms national monument expansion* — On July 18, a circuit court of appeals ruled in favor of the 2017 expansion of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument (a Bureau of Land Management unit), denying the American Forest Resource Council's argument that the expansion conflicts with laws that require the government to set aside lands for timber harvest. The court concluded that legislation allowed for protections for uses other than timber, and that the unit's relatively small size in comparison to the lands left for timber harvest was not an encumbrance to the industry. The AFRC has stated it will continue to pursue appeals until "fundamental questions" about the Antiquities Act are answered. Source: [Jefferson Public Radio](#)
- *"National Park Grandeur Degraded by Global Warming"* — The Union of Concerned Scientists published [an article](#) with this title, outlining the effects of global climate change on national park resources and visitors' experiences. Source: *Union of Concerned Scientists*
- *NPS Director on podcast* — *The Washington Post* featured NPS Director Chuck Sams as a guest on its "Field Trip" podcast, a five-part series on "the messy past and uncertain future of America's national parks." The conversation touched on themes such as climate change, infrastructure, visitation, Tribal co-management, workforce, and the concept of wilderness. Source: [The Washington Post](#)

## Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Acadia National Park* — The park is accepting proposals now through September 15 for a concession opportunity to operate carriage tours and equestrian services at Wildwood Stables. The contract is expected to begin in 2024 and last for 10 years. Source: [Acadia National Park](#)
- *Arches National Park* — A group of volunteers at the park known as the "Sticker Club" received the 2023 George and Helen Hartzog Award for the Outstanding Volunteer Team category. The group helped the park's timed entry system by marking over 285,000 park brochures with stickers, which freed up NPS staff to accomplish other tasks. Source: [Arches National Park](#)
- *Big Bend National Park* — In April, "A Sampling of Archeological Resources in Big Bend National Park, Texas" was published, in collaboration between the NPS Intermountain Archaeology Program, the Center for Big Bend Studies at Sul Ross State University, and several dozen archaeologists, biologists, and historians. The 900+-page report is a culmination of decades of field work and surveys over 62,000 acres, "possibly the largest ever [survey] conducted in the National Park Service." The *Big Bend Sentinel* published a [long form article](#) about the survey, including interviews with many of the authors. Source: *Big Bend Sentinel*
- *Big Thicket National Preserve* - On July 21, the park announced that it has received \$550,000 in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding to plug two orphaned wells. Source: [Big Thicket National Preserve](#)
- *Brices Cross Roads National Battlefield, Tupelo National Battlefield* — Starting on July 10, park staff are collaborating with the Historic Preservation Training Center to restore monuments and markers at both sites. Source: [Natchez Trace Parkway](#)
- *Buffalo National River* — PBS published [an article](#) about the agreement between the NPS and the Cherokee Nation, signed in April 2022, that allows the Tribe to collect 76 different plants in a 1,000-acre area. Source: PBS
- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* — The park has opened bids for a contract to repair the exterior and interior of the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse. Bids are due by August 3. Source: [Cape Hatteras National Seashore](#)
- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* — The park has opened bids for a contract to construct the 1.25-mile paved multi-use pathway from the intersection of N.C. Highway 12 and Lighthouse Road in Buxton to the Cape Hatteras Light Station. Bids are due August 21. Source: [Cape Hatteras National Seashore](#)
- *Charles Pinckney National Historic Site* — On July 7, the park completed a large upgrade, including infrastructure, new exhibits, a walking trail, a picnic area, and updates to the junior ranger program. Source: [WCB D](#)

- *Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area* — The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* published [an article](#) about the efforts of Sally Bethea to found and direct Chattahoochee Riverkeeper. The organization has been instrumental in getting the city of Atlanta, Georgia, to fix its sewer system and limit pollution entering the river. The article draws on a new memoir that Sally wrote, called, *Keeping the Chattahoochee: Reviving and Defending a Great Southern River*. Source: *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*
- *Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park* — This summer, the park will replace the Edwards Ferry Boat Ramp (mile 30.8), Dargan Bend Recreation Area Boat Ramp (mile 64.9), and Fifteen Mile Creek Campground Boat Ramp (mile 140.8). The effort will be done in stages, starting this month, and will extend through January 2024. Each ramp will be closed while it is being replaced. The closure will not affect the towpath. Source: [Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park](#)
- *Crater Lake National Park* — On July 11, the park announced that a four-mile section of East Rim between Cleetwood Cove and the Skell Head Overlook will be closed for the 2023 season. The closure is the first of several over the course of the next five years, intended to rehabilitate 19 miles of East Rim Drive and the spur road to Cloudcap Overlook. The \$56 million project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [Seattle Times](#)
- *Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park* — On July 6, U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and U.S. Representative Mike Turner (R-OH) sent a letter to NPS, urging the agency to purchase the Wright Company Factory buildings. The buildings have been slated for NPS purchase since 2009 and funds were appropriated in 2018. The buildings recently experienced a fire (see [4/5/23 Coalition Report](#)), and the two politicians would like to see them stewarded more effectively. Source: [WHIO](#)
- *Death Valley National Park* — NPR published [an article](#) about the study, survival, and controversy of the endangered Devils Hole pupfish, which lives only in one location in Death Valley. Source: NPR
- *Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area* — On July 17, a trail crew began the final stage of repairs to the Dingmans Falls boardwalk trail. The trail was in need of repair due to heavy use. Construction is expected to be complete this fall. Source: [Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area](#)
- *Denali National Park and Preserve* — The *Anchorage Daily News* published [an article](#) about the effects of global climate change, particularly the Pretty Rocks landslide, which was caused by melting permafrost and has affected the park's main access road. Source: *Anchorage Daily News*
- *Everglades National Park* - On July 5, the NPS signed a Finding of No Significant Impact for the Shark Valley Site Plan, which aims to enhance visitor safety and experience, as well as park operations. Source: [Everglades National Park](#)
- *Fort Raleigh National Historic Site* — The park is currently installing a new "Freedom Interpretive Trail," a 1.25-mile walk near the site of the former Freedmen's Colony. The

trail and exhibits are expected to be complete by the end of the year. Source: [Coastal Review](#)

- *Fort Vancouver National Historic Site* — The park has opened a new exhibit and summer Junior Ranger program, called "Look for the Helpers," that focuses on past, present, and future stewardship of the park. Source: [Fort Vancouver National Historic Site](#)
- *Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve* — *The Washington Post* published [a long-form article](#) about the Ambler Access Project, a proposed 211-mile private road that would run from Dalton Highway to the Ambler Mining District along the southern Brooks Range, including through Gates of the Arctic. The project has been controversial, and a Record of Decision for the project has been delayed several times [*Editor note: A status update was expected on July 18, but as of July 23, had not been released*]. Source: The Washington Post, [Alaska's News Source](#)
- *Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve* — The NPS recently signed a Finding of No Significant Impact for its Backcountry and Wilderness Management Plan. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Glacier National Park* — On July 20, the park opened boating opportunities on Two Medicine and St. Mary Lakes for the first time since 2019. The operation is contingent upon a partnership with the Blackfeet Tribe, which is providing aquatic invasive species inspection stations via a contract with the NPS. Boating had been postponed due to the pandemic and a lack of NPS staffing for the inspection stations. Source: [Glacier National Park](#)
- *Glacier National Park* — *Outside* published [an op-ed](#) that argues that the park should adapt to the growing popularity of the Continental Divide Trail by mimicking counterpart parks on other national scenic trails in their permitting processes. Source: *Outside*
- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* — On July 12, the park announced that it is drafting an environmental assessment for the City of San Francisco's Ocean Beach Climate Change Adaptation Project, which seeks to add an easement for a seawall to protect a wastewater system and public access to the southern portion of Ocean Beach. The EA is expected to be open for public comment in Fall 2023. Source: [Golden Gate National Recreation Area](#)
- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - On July 10, Muir Woods National Monument began Phase 2 of its Redwood Creek salmon habitat enhancement project. This phase will restore natural creek features, first removing aquatic life and draining the work zone, then removing riprap walls and asphalt, adding fallen trees, and revegetating with native plants. The project will continue through November and there are expected to be some trail detours during this time. Source: [Golden Gate National Recreation Area](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* — On July 6, the park announced they have received a \$27.5 million grant from the Federal Highway Administration to replace its shuttle bus fleet, including 10 battery electric buses, 20 natural gas buses, and charging infrastructure. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)

- *Grand Canyon National Park* — The park is moving its backcountry permit system online to *Recreation.gov*, starting in 2024. The new system will replace the current fax application process, and is expected to streamline the process for visitors and provide them with more control of their itineraries. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)
- *Grand Teton National Park* - The park has issued two prospectuses for concession contracts to provide guided mountain climbing, climbing instruction, ski mountaineering, and other services. The contracts are expected to last 10 years, starting on January 1, 2024. Proposals are due on September 19. Source: [Grand Teton National Park](#)
- *Grand Teton National Park, Historic Preservation Training Center* (an NPS-administered program) - *Jackson Hole Community Radio* published [an article](#) about a program that recently brought students from Stephen T. Mather Building Arts and Craftsmanship High School in New York City to the park for a field trip to learn how to preserve historic structures. Source: *KHOL*
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* — This month, the park began a project to reconstruct Lakeview Drive and repair Heintooga Ridge Road. The \$18.7 million project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act and was contracted by the Federal Highway Administration to Bryant's Land and Development Industries of Burnsville, North Carolina. Delays and closures are expected during the work. The project is expected to be complete this fall. Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* — The park is partnering with Knox County, Catalyst Sports, and Friends of the Smokies this summer to offer three adaptive programs this summer, in hiking and biking, utilizing off-road wheelchairs and adaptive mountain bikes. After these programs conclude, all visitors will have access to borrow two off-road wheelchairs for personal use on park trails. The program and equipment were funded by a \$16,390 grant from National Environmental Education Foundation and Toyota North America. Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)
- *Independence National Historical Park* — The park has received \$22.2 million in Great American Outdoors Act funding to rehabilitate the First Bank of the United States, a building that the park has owned since 1956, but has mostly been closed to the public due to extensive maintenance needs. The work has been contracted to Bedwell Company of West Chester, Pennsylvania. Additionally, the Independence Historical Trust has raised \$4.5 million for planning and for the design, fabrication, and installation of exhibits for the building. The rehabilitation is expected to be complete in time for the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 2026. Source: [Independence National Historical Park](#)
- *Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Program* (an NPS-administered program) — On June 29, a new film, "Removed by Force: The Eviction of Hawai'i's Japanese Americans during World War II," debuted at the Hawai'i Convention Center. The film was funded by the JACS grant program and several corporate donors. It features the seldom-told story of Japanese Americans who were forcibly removed from their homes during World War II but were not incarcerated in one of the Japanese American

incarceration camps. The film is being aired multiple times in Hawai'i this summer and fall, and at the 2023 Japanese American Citizens League National Convention in Los Angeles. Source: [Maui Now](#)

- *Minidoka National Historic Site* — On July 8, the park hosted its annual pilgrimage for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic. At the pilgrimage, the park provided an updated "Honor Roll," the list of individuals who were incarcerated and then served in the military during World War II. 140 names have been added to the list of roughly 1,000 people, and the NPS' work to research and add names is ongoing. Source: [Boise State Public Radio](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - *The Washington Post* published [an article](#) about the current conundrum about where to place the Women's Suffrage National Monument. The monument was signed into law in 2020, but its progress has been delayed by disagreements about where to put it. The National Mall has strict guidelines for adding memorials, and alternative sites have thus far been rejected due to lack of visibility. Source: *The Washington Post*
- *National Register of Historic Places* (an NPS-administered program) — On July 17, the NPS made an official determination that the Deborah Chapel is just outside the boundaries of the Frog Hollow Historic District in Hartford, Connecticut. The owners of the chapel, Congregation Beth Israel, have sought to demolish it due to acts of vandalism and the need for more room in the adjacent cemetery. The Connecticut Attorney General has been preparing a lawsuit to protect the chapel under the presumption that it is part of the historic district. Since receiving the NPS' letter, the State has stated publicly that it is still interested in protecting the building but no longer has jurisdiction in the matter. Source: [Hartford Courant](#)
- *National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program* (an NPS-administered program) — In celebration of its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the program released the first four videos of its new series, "Questioning Conversations." The series, made through a cooperative agreement with the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, "captures conversations by scholars of Underground Railroad history with diverse culture creators." Intended to be inclusive to a diverse, young audience, the videos were beta-tested with Oak Park River Forest High School in Oak Park, Illinois. The remainder of the series will be released over the next 12 months. Source: [National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom](#)
- *North Cascades National Park* — The NPS signed a Finding of No Significant Impact for backcountry camp modifications on the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail and Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. Source: [North Cascades National Park](#)
- *Olympic National Park* — Dr. Patti Happe received the NPS Director's Award for Professional Excellence in Natural Resource Stewardship for her "tremendous contributions to restoring native wildlife and ecological balance on the Olympic Peninsula." Patti retired from the NPS in June after 28 years as the park's wildlife branch chief. Source: [Olympic National Park](#)

- *Point Reyes National Seashore* — On July 6, the park announced that it has selected Point Reyes Lodging Corporation as the new concessioner, starting on October 17, 2023, and lasting for 10 years. The new operator also runs a concession currently at Pinnacles National Park. Source: [Point Reyes National Seashore](#)
- *Reconstruction Era National Historical Park* — The park is currently hosting an exhibit at Darrah Hall from the University of South Carolina's Center for Civil Rights History and Research, called "Justice for All." The exhibit "uses oral history recordings, news film footage, photographs, postcards, newspapers, and letters to highlight overlooked chapters in the history of the [civil rights] movement." Source: [Reconstruction Era National Historical Park](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - The *Estes Park News* published [an article](#) about two new outdoor exhibits currently under design that will be installed near the entrance of Moraine Park. The exhibits are focused on elk behavior, and are being designed with accessible features. The project is being designed, fabricated, and funded by the Kahuna Memorial Project. The exhibits will be installed this fall. Source: *Estes Park News*
- *Theodore Roosevelt National Park* — On July 13, Chasing Horses Wild Horse Advocates hosted the "Bully Pulpit Rally" to advocate for keeping wild horses in the park and to offer expertise and support to the NPS to do so. The park's preferred alternative under its Livestock Management Plan proposed removing all wild horses, which has received ample pushback from visitors and public officials. Organizations in attendance included American Wild Horse Campaign, North Dakota Badlands Horse, and Wild Lands, Wild Horses. Source: [InForum](#)
- *Voyageurs National Park* — Starting in late August, the park will begin a project to replace the Kabetogama Lake Boat Launch Ramp. The project is being funded by the Repair Rehabilitation Maintenance Program. Contractor selection is currently underway. The project is expected to wrap up at the end of September, depending on weather conditions and other variables. Source: [Voyageurs National Park](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* — On July 13, a small ribbon cutting was held to celebrate the expansion of the Bison Conservation Transfer Program quarantine facility at Stephens Creek. The \$1 million expansion is being funded by the park, Yellowstone Forever, and the Greater Yellowstone Coalition. Source: [Billings Gazette](#)

## Personnel Changes

- *Acadia National Park* — Joy Absher was selected as the chief of visitor experience and education. Joy has many years of NPS experience and most recently worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as the Visitor Services Manager for Eastern Massachusetts National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Source: [Acadia National Park](#)
- *Alaska Region* — Jeff Rasic was selected as the region's science advisor and the lead for the Cooperative Ecosystems Study Unit. Jeff has many years of NPS experience, most recently as the chief of integrated resources management at Gates of the Arctic



National Park and Preserve and Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve. Jeff will begin his new role on July 28. Source: [Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve](#)

- *Castle Mountains National Monument, Mojave National Preserve* — Debra Hughson was selected as the deputy superintendent for the two parks. Debra has many decades of federal service including 22 years at Mojave National Preserve, most recently as its chief of science and resource management. Debra starts her new role this month. Source: [Mojave National Preserve](#)
- *Chattahoochee National Park Conservancy* (philanthropic partner) — The organization has hired its first executive director, Brittany Jones. Brittany was formerly the executive director at Smith-Gilbert Gardens in Kennesaw, Georgia. She began her new role on July 10. Source: [East Cobb News](#)
- *Fort Union National Monument, Pecos National Historical Park* — Brenda Todd was selected as superintendent. She has many years of NPS experience, including several as superintendent and deputy superintendent, "most recently at Badlands National Park and Minuteman Missile National Historic Site." She begins her new role this month. Source: [Los Alamos Daily Post](#), [Pecos National Historical Park](#)
- *Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve* — Andrea Compton was selected as superintendent. Andrea has many years of NPS experience, most recently as superintendent at Cabrillo National Monument. She started her new role on July 17. Source: [Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Vicksburg National Military Park* — Carrie Mardorf was selected as superintendent. Carrie has 14 years of NPS experience, most recently as the superintendent at Cane River Creole National Historical Park and as the acting superintendent at Vicksburg. She starts her new role on September 10. Source: [Vicksburg National Military Park](#)

## **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**

- Priscilla Ann Claren (Bolivar), 72, passed away on July 3. Priscilla worked as a "bookkeeper in Sequoia National Park" for a time. Source: [Holman Howe Funeral Homes](#)
- Evelyn Penman Forsgren, 85, passed away on July 5. Evelyn "spent time after high school working at Yellowstone National Park." Source: [Legacy/Myers Mortuary — Brigham City](#)
- Victor Charles Gavin, 79, passed away on June 27. Victor worked for the NPS for a time, retiring from Gettysburg National Military Park in 2010. Source: [The Fulton County News](#)

- Gary Martell Hasty, 80, passed away on January 13. Gary worked for the NPS for over 30 years, including as superintendent at Natural Bridges National Monument and at Pipe Spring National Monument. He also worked at Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Rocky Mountain National Park, Arches National Park, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, Shenandoah National Park, Canyon de Chelly National Monument, and the Intermountain Region Office. Source: [Los Alamos Daily Post](#)
- Albert "Al" James Hendricks, 73, passed away on July 16. Al worked for the NPS for 42 years, retiring in 2012 as the superintendent at Capitol Reef. He also worked at Mammoth Cave National Park, Canyonlands National Park, St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, Yellowstone National Park, Jewel Cave National Monument, Great Basin National Park, and Crater Lake National Park. Source: [Tribute Archive](#)
- Kenneth "Ken" Paul Hutchison, 61, passed away on June 10. Ken was "a retired Facilities Manager for the National Park Service in Alaska." Source: [Legacy/Wichita Eagle](#)
- John Browning Odell Jr., 62, passed away on July 17. John worked for a time at Independence National Historical Park. Source: [The Daily Star](#)
- William "Billy" Franklin Thomas, 78, passed away on May 2. Billy worked in Yosemite National Park for many years, including "at the pack station," in maintenance for the Curry Company and the NPS, and at the helm of the Youth Conservation Corps. He retired after 40 years of service. Source: [Mariposa Gazette](#)
- Mary Jane Zinn, 81, passed away on July 22. Mary Jane worked for a time as a ranger at Glacier National Park. Source: [Williamsport Sun-Gazette](#)

## **Retired**

- On July 1, Leslie Obleschuk began "a period of phased retirement with the park." Leslie has worked for the NPS for 43 years and is retiring as the chief of interpretation and education at Independence National Historical Park. She also started her career as a seasonal ranger at Independence in 1980. Other stints included time at Minute Man National Historical Park, Lowell National Historical Park, Edgar Allen Poe National Historic Site, Adams National Historical Park, Springfield Armory National Historic Site, John F. Kennedy National Historic Site, Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, the Northeast Regional Office, and Valley Forge National Historical Park. Source: [Independence National Historical Park](#)

## **In the News**

- Butch Farabee was quoted in an *Associated Press* [article](#) about the cost of rescue attempts and who is responsible for paying, in light of the recent costly rescue attempt for the *Titan* submersible. Butch worked for the NPS for many years (and is a Coalition member), including a lot of search and rescue work. He also has written several books

on the subject. Source: *Associated Press*

- Nigel Fields is leaving his position as superintendent at Virgin Islands National Park for a "senior executive position" at the Environmental Protection Agency. He worked for the NPS for eight years. Prior to that time, he worked at the EPA for 15 years. Source: [Virgin Islands National Park](#)
- Pamela Smith was selected as the chief of police for the District of Columbia. Pamela worked for the U.S. Park Police for 24 years, including 14 months as the chief, before stepping down in April 2022. She joined the D.C. police in May 2022. Source: [The Washington Post](#)

### **Open for Comment**

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

- *Assateague Island National Seashore* - Public comment is [open through August 1](#) on a plan to reconfigure the South Ocean Beach area and the Over-Sand Vehicle (OSV) Entrance Road. Source: [Assateague Island National Seashore](#)
- *Bandelier National Monument* — Public comment is [open through August 11](#) on an Air Tour Management Plan for the park. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Buck Island National Monument* — Public comment is open through August 26 on a proposal to increase anchoring and mooring fees in order to move the system online. Comments may be made by email, mail, or phone. Source: [Buck Island National Monument](#)
- *César E. Chávez National Monument* - Public comment is [open through August 23](#) on an accessibility Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. Source: [César E. Chávez National Monument](#)
- *George Rogers Clark National Historical Park* — Public comment is [open through August 18](#) on an accessibility Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. Source: [George Rogers Clark National Historical Park](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - Public comment is [open through July 30](#) on a proposal to improve roads, parking, and the water system in the Swiftcurrent area. The area would be closed from Fall 2024 through Spring 2026 for the improvements. [A storymap](#) for the project is available. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality has opened public comment through August 1 on the proposal to modify an Arizona Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit to the park for the Havasupai Garden Potable Water Pump Station. Comments may be submitted by email or postal mail. Source: [Arizona Department of Environmental Quality](#)
- *Japanese American Confinement Grant Program* (an NPS-administered program) —

Public comment is [open through September 15](#) on the guidelines and criteria for the newly-established Norman Y. Mineta Japanese American Confinement Education Grant Program. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)

- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through August 4](#) on a draft Sustainable Low Water Access Plan. Source: [KTNV](#)
- *Mammoth Cave National Park* - Public comment is [open through July 28](#) on a proposed increase of fees for cave tours, camping, and electric vehicle charging, starting in 2024. Source: [WCLU](#)
- *Mammoth Cave National Park* - Public comment is [open through August 25](#) on a Land and River Trails Management Plan. A [storymap](#) and [informational video](#) for the project are available. Source: [Mammoth Cave National Park](#)
- *Mesa Verde National Park, Yucca House National Monument* — Public comment is [open through August 11](#) on a proposed fire management plan for the two parks. Source: [Mesa Verde National Park](#)
- *Natchez Trace Parkway* — Public comment is [open through August 9](#) on a proposed framework for addressing future road and bridge paving and rehabilitation projects on the parkway. Source: [Natchez Trace Parkway](#)
- *National Capital Parks — East* — Public comment is [open through August 16](#) on a draft damage assessment plan for the restoration of the Anacostia River. The plan is on behalf of the the Anacostia River Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Trustees, which include the Department of Commerce, represented by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; the Department of the Interior, represented by the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and the Government of the District of Columbia, represented by the Department of Energy and Environment. The plan will account for injuries to natural resources resulting from the release of hazardous substances into the river. Source: [National Capital Parks - East](#)
- *Rock Creek Park* — Public comment is [open through August 19](#) on proposed application fees for Special Use Permits for construction and other activities in the park. Source: [Rock Creek Park](#)
- *Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway* — Public comment is [open through August 8](#) on a comprehensive river management plan. Source: [Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway](#)
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* — Public comment is [open through August 6](#) on a plan to re-establish tree seedlings in severely burned giant sequoia groves and adjacent Pacific fisher habitat. Source: [Sierra Sun Times](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* — A second round of public comments is [open through September 6](#) on a Visitor Access Management Plan. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)

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

- *\$300 million for outdoor recreation* — On July 21, the Department of the Interior announced \$300 million in Land and Water Conservation Fund grants to all 50 states, U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia for projects related to conservation and recreation, to be disbursed by each state. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Lithium exploration canceled* — On July 19, the Bureau of Land Management's southern Nevada district rescinded its Acknowledgment of the Notice issued on April 6, which would have allowed Rover Metals to drill 30 test bores for lithium on lands adjacent to the Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. The agency's action comes after a July 7 lawsuit filed by the Center for Biological Diversity and Amargosa Conservancy, claiming that it threatens multiple endangered species. The BLM stated that the "proposed operations are likely to result in disturbance to localized groundwaters that supply the connected surface waters associated with Threatened and Endangered species in local springs." Source: [Associated Press](#)
- *Plan to ban rockhounding in Mojave Trails* — The *Los Angeles Times* published [an article](#) about the current plan to limit the hobby of rockhounding without a mining permit at Mojave Trails National Monument (a Bureau of Land Management unit). Rockhounding is a popular pastime in the area. Source: *Los Angeles Times*
- *Oil and gas leasing rule change* — On July 20, the Department of the Interior announced a proposed rule change to "revise outdated fiscal terms of the onshore federal oil and gas leasing program, including for bonding requirements, royalty rates, and minimum bids," with the aim of maximizing returns to the public and discouraging speculation. The proposed rule codifies previous executive orders and Congressional provisions. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *First wind lease sale in Gulf of Mexico* — On July 20, the Department of the Interior announced the first-ever offshore wind lease sale in the Gulf of Mexico, to be auctioned on August 29 by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$120 million for Tribes to combat climate change* — On July 19, the Department of the Interior announced \$120 million in funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Inflation Reduction Act, and Fiscal Year 2023 annual appropriations to be granted through the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Tribal Climate Annual Awards Program. Grants will be available for planning and adaptation related to climate change impacts. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *DOI official transition* — On July 17, Tanya Trujillo, assistant secretary for water and science for the Department of the Interior, stepped down from her position. She has served in the role since June 2021 and said her departure was timed as the President Joe Biden administration gears up for a reelection campaign. On July 19, the DOI announced that Michael Brain has been appointed into the position. Michael has most recently served as the Deputy Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation since March 2022. Source: [Arizona Capitol Times](#), [Department of the Interior](#)

- *Contamination lawsuit thrown out* - On July 18, a federal court dismissed a lawsuit by the State of Alaska against the Department of the Interior over liability for contaminated land given to Alaska Native corporations under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. The judge sided with the DOI's argument that they had complied with the law by identifying and coming up with a plan to clean them up before transferring them. Alaska is considering an appeal. Source: [KUCB](#)

## **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**

**July 11** - Senate reported [S. 92](#), to designate the outdoor amphitheater at the Blue Ridge Music Center in Galax, Virginia, as the "Rick Boucher Amphitheater." ([S. Rept. No. 118-48](#))

**July 12** - Committee on Energy and Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests and Mining held a hearing on a number of bills, including

- [S. 1254](#), to designate and expand wilderness areas in Olympic National Forest in the State of Washington, and to designate certain rivers in Olympic National Forest and Olympic National Park as wild and scenic rivers
- [S. 1622](#), to discourage speculative oil and gas leasing and to promote enhanced multiple use management of public land and National Forest System land, and additionally include protections for national parks and other special places before nearby parcels are included in variance leases
- [S. 1634](#), to provide for the designation of certain wilderness areas, recreation management areas, and conservation areas in the state of Colorado, and include establishment of an official designated boundary for Curecanti National Recreation Area.

**July 19** - Senate reported [S. 736](#), to establish the Chiricahua National Park in the state of Arizona as a unit of the National Park System. ([S. Rept. No. 118-66](#)); and [S. 776](#), to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate certain segments of the Gila River system in the state of New Mexico as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System; to provide for the transfer of administrative jurisdiction of certain federal land in the state of New Mexico from Gila National Forest to Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument. ([S. Rept. No. 118-67](#)).

### **House Actions**

**July 13** - Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies held a markup on the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies FY 2024 Appropriations Bill and subsequently forwarded the bill to the full committee, without amendment.

**July 13** - Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing on

several bills, including:

- H.R. 386, to provide that no federal funds shall be used to alter, change, destroy, or remove, in whole or in part, any name, face, or other feature on the Mount Rushmore National Memorial.
- H.R. 1318, to authorize the location of a monument on the National Mall to commemorate and honor the women's suffrage movement and the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution.
- H.R. 2717, to authorize the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation to establish a commemorative work on the National Mall to honor the extraordinary acts of valor, selfless service, and sacrifice displayed by Medal of Honor recipients.
- H.R. 3448, To amend Chapter 3081 of Title 54, United States Code, to enhance the protection and preservation of America's battlefields.

Testimony was heard from Representatives Johnson of South Dakota, Grijalva, Neguse, and Moore of Utah; Ravi I. Chaudhary, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Energy, Installations, and Environment, U.S. Air Force; Mike Reynolds, Deputy Director, Congressional and External Relations, National Park Service, Department of the Interior; Helene Duhamel, State Senator, South Dakota; Master Chief Britt Slabinski, U.S. Navy (Retired), Special Warfare Operator (SEAL), U.S. Navy; and public witnesses.

**July 14** - Full House passed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024, [H.R. 2670](#), to authorize appropriations for Fiscal Year 2024 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, by a yea-and-nay vote of 219 yeas to 210 nays, [Roll No. 328](#). Final language not available to determine any items that would relate to National Park Service/Park System concerns.

**July 19** - Committee on Appropriations held a markup on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies FY 2024 Appropriations Bill. The Bill was ordered reported, as amended.

**July 20** - Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing on a number of bills including legislation on Military and Veterans in Parks (MVP) Act; and [H.R. 1786](#), the "GROW Act." The "Grow Act" would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress a report on the Warrior Training Advancement Course, to direct the Secretary of the Interior to administer a pilot program to employ veterans in positions that relate to conservation and resource management activities of the Department of the Interior, and for other purposes. Frank Lands, Deputy Director for Operations, National Park Service, testified before the subcommittee.

## **Incidents**

*Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.*

### **Bandelier National Monument**

#### **Lead toxicity**

On July 7, the park closed its visitor center to evaluate "indoor environmental conditions." On July 21, the park released a report that the closure was due to staff finding a type of lead oxide in the varnish on some historic furnishings undergoing conservation work outside the park. Out of an abundance of caution, they decided to close the visitor center for further tests. An NPS industrial hygienist conducted a variety of environmental tests and staff underwent blood sampling to determine if there was any threat to employee and visitor health. All tests revealed undetectable or low levels of lead and the building was deemed safe. The visitor center reopened on July 22. Source: Bandelier National Monument ([7/7](#), [7/22](#))

### **Carlsbad Caverns National Park** **Lightning-caused power outage**

On July 15, lightning strikes at the visitor center caused a power outage that disabled lights and elevators. The cavern was closed for the day and reopened the following day. Source: [KVIA](#)

### **Death Valley National Park** **Heat fatalities**

On July 3, an NPS maintenance staff member came upon a car with two flat tires, 30 yards off the North Highway. Upon inspection, the staff found a deceased 65-year-old in the driver seat. The car was operational and did not show signs of a crash, but the air conditioning was not working and the window was down. Temperatures the day prior were estimated at a high of 126 and low of 86 overnight. It is suspected that the individual became unconscious due to the heat while driving and swerved off the road, puncturing their tires. Park rangers, the Inyo County Sheriff's Office, and Inyo County Coroner's Office responded to the incident. Source: [CNN](#)

On July 18, a 71-year-old collapsed outside the restroom at the Golden Canyon Trailhead. A park visitor called 911. NPS staff attempted to resuscitate the individual, but they were unsuccessful. Temperatures were reported over 120 degrees that day in the park. The individual had just completed a 4-mile hike and had been interviewed by a reporter earlier in the day about hiking in heat. The cause of death is under investigation, and is presumed to be related to the heat. Source: [Associated Press](#), [Death Valley National Park](#)

### **Death Valley National Park** **5 burros killed**

During the week of July 9, five burros were discovered to have been shot and killed in the Lower Wildrose area of the park. Burros are not native to the park, but this incident was not associated with National Park Service efforts to cull them from the park. The incident is considered an illegal use of a firearm in the park. The incident is under investigation and the park is seeking any information the public can provide. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)

### **Death Valley National Park** **Asphalt spill**

On July 17, a commercial truck crashed after its brakes failed while descending Daylight Pass, spilling an estimated 5,000 gallons of emulsified asphalt and 150 gallons of diesel fuel. The



driver was uninjured and was able to flag down other visitors to get a ride to a location with cell phone signal to report the incident. Commercial vehicles are prohibited on Daylight Pass, in part due to the steep grades and high temperatures that can overheat brakes easily. The trucking company is working with the NPS to clean the site and remove the wreck, and charges for the violation are pending. Source: [KTNV](#)

### **Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area** **Swimming fatality**

On July 13, a 19-year-old went missing while swimming in the Karamac section of the Delaware River on the New Jersey side. They were attempting to swim from the shoreline to the bridge abutments with three other people. The individual was observed struggling in the current before they disappeared underneath the water and did not resurface. One of the other swimmers was able to swim to shore, and two others required rescue. The individuals were not wearing personal flotation devices and were not in a designated swimming area. The NPS started a search on foot and by boat for the missing individual but was unable to put divers in the water due to dangerous high water and low visibility. The individual was found on July 16, in about 12 feet of water, a mile downstream from the location they were last seen. Source: [News 12 New Jersey, WRNJ](#)

### **Glen Canyon National Recreation Area** **Cliff jumping fatality**

On July 20, a 36-year-old was observed jumping off a 50-foot cliff into Lake Powell, about one-quarter mile south of Buoy 89 (89 miles from Glen Canyon Dam). The individual failed to resurface, and emergency personnel were contacted. Staff from the NPS, Utah Department of Natural Resources, and Kane County Sheriff's Office conducted a search. The following day, the Utah Department of Public Safety Dive Team used a side scan sonar to locate the victim in about 30 feet of water, and divers completed the recovery. The individual's body was transported by DNR staff to Bullfrog, Utah, then transferred to the custody of the Utah State Medical Examiner in Salt Lake City for an autopsy. The incident is under investigation by the Kane County Sheriff's Office, Utah State Medical Examiner's Office, and the NPS. Source: [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#)

### **Grand Canyon National Park** **Illegal packrafting**

On May 15, an individual entered a guilty plea on misdemeanor charges of leading a backcountry packrafting trip without a permit and entering a restricted area. In mid-July, they were sentenced to a \$2,500 fine and two years' probation, including a two-year ban from all national parks, national monuments, and federal recreation areas. Packrafting is permitted in the Grand Canyon under specific parameters in the Superintendent's Compendium, which were not heeded. This is the individual's second conviction for illegally packrafting in the park. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

### **Grand Teton National Park** **Illegal helicopter landing**

On June 24, a helicopter landed illegally at Moran Bay on the west shore of Jackson Lake. The

individual claimed they landed there due to poor weather, while NPS officials said that when they reached the aircraft, the pilot and a passenger were "having a picnic." On July 10, the pilot was charged with two federal misdemeanor violations for landing in an illegal place and using an aircraft outside of Federal Aviation Administration guidelines. The individual will appear in front of a federal judge in August. This is the individual's second time being cited for illegal helicopter use in a park; the other was in Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. The individual paid a \$530 fine for that incident in February. The individual owns a company related to aircraft, but it is unclear whether either of these incidents is related to the business. Source: [USA Today](#), [KFYR](#)

## **Grand Teton National Park**

### **Climbing fatality**

On July 20, an individual fell 40 to 50 feet while climbing on the Owen Chimney pitch on the Owen-Spalding route of the Grand Teton. NPS staff responded to the scene, and the individual was found deceased from their fall injuries. The individual's body was transported from the scene by helicopter short-haul and transferred to the Teton County (WY) Coroner's Office. The individual's two climbing partners were also helicoptered from the scene to the Jenny Lake Search and Rescue Cache at Lupine Meadows. Source: [Grand Teton National Park](#)

## **Guadalupe Mountains National Park**

### **Wildfire**

On July 14, the park received a report of smoke in the area of Cutoff Ridge. As of July 19, the Cutoff Ridge Fire was 449 acres and burning in a remote area with no threats to life or structures. The fire is being managed by ground and air crews. Source: [Guadalupe Mountains National Park](#), [Carlsbad Current Argus](#)

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

### **Tropical storm closure**

Most of the park was closed preemptively on July 18 ahead of the landfall of Tropical Storm Calvin, which was expected to bring heavy rainfall, flooding, damaging wind, and high surf for several days. The park received relatively minimal damage in the storm and most areas reopened on July 19. Source: Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park ([7/18](#), [7/19](#))

## **Kenai Fjords National Park**

### **Teen hiker fatality**

On July 17, a 15-year-old was hiking on the Harding Icefield Trail, about 3.7 miles in, when they went into cardiac arrest. Bystanders and NPS staff performed CPR until a LifeFlight helicopter was able to arrive on scene. Despite additional resuscitation efforts by the LifeMed paramedics, the individual was pronounced deceased at the scene. Other responders on the incident included Alaska Wildlife Troopers, the Bear Creek Fire Department, the Seward Volunteer Ambulance, and Alaska State Troopers. The incident is under investigation by the NPS and Alaska State Troopers. Source: [Peninsula Clarion](#)

## **Lake Chelan National Recreation Area**

### **Wildfire**

On July 10, a fire was detected in the area of the Rainbow Loop. Aerial support and smoke jumpers from North Cascades, Missoula, and Redmond smokejumpers responded to the fire. Boulder Creek Trail and Hooter, Rennie, and Reynolds Hiker and Stock camps closed temporarily. On July 15, the fire was declared extinguished, and the closed areas reopened. Source: North Cascades National Park ([7/12](#), [7/15](#))

## **Minute Man National Historical Park**

### **Arson**

On July 9, four fires were started within an hour in Concord, Massachusetts. The fourth fire was a shed on NPS property. An individual was taken into custody that evening and "brought to an undisclosed hospital for a mental health evaluation." No injuries were reported in relation to the fires. As of July 10, the incident was still under investigation, and no charges had been filed. Source: [Boston Globe](#)

## **Olympic National Park**

### **Fishing closure**

On July 15, the park enacted recreational fishing closures on the Quillayute, Dickey, Bogachiel, South Fork Calawah, Sol Duc, and North Fork Sol Duc Rivers and their tributaries due to low-water conditions and salmon returns that appear to be "well below the preseason forecast." Source: [Olympic National Park](#)

## **Olympic National Park**

### **Backcountry fatality**

On July 20, an individual was reported overdue from a solo backcountry trip on the Bailey Range Traverse, an off-trail route across the "interior of the Olympic Mountains." The NPS began a search, including ground teams, a U.S. Coast Guard helicopter, and the park's A-STAR helicopter. On July 22, the U.S. Coast Guard located the individual's body below Stephen Peak. A ground team was able to confirm the individual's identity. The A-STAR helicopter utilized a short-haul to extract the individual's body. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)

## **Ozark National Scenic Riverways**

### **Storm damage**

Recent storms brought a three-foot diameter tree onto the historic Pulltite Cabin, crushing part of the roof, buckling part of the south wall, and causing other structural damage. Park crews are working on a way to remove the tree and perform a structural assessment. There is no estimated timeline for the work. The area around the cabin is currently closed. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)

## **Rocky Mountain National Park**

### **Climbing Fatality**

On July 16, a 26-year-old was free solo climbing (without ropes or equipment) on Ypsilon Mountain, on a route known as "Four Aces of Blitzen Ridge," when they took a 500-foot fall. Another individual climbing with the victim, who was uninjured, notified the NPS and the

search and rescue team was able to rendezvous with them. A helicopter from the Colorado Air National Guard's Buckley Air Force Base extracted the uninjured member of the party. The following morning, a Search and Rescue team from the park hiked to Ypsilon Lake and assisted Northern Colorado Interagency Helitac in extracting the victim's body. The Larimer County (CO) Coroner's Office met the helicopter in the Upper Beaver Meadows area. They later determined the cause of the victim's death to be multiple blunt force injuries. Source: [Sky-Hi News](#)

### **Rocky Mountain National Park Climber rescue**

On July 11, a party of two climbers set out from Chasm Lake to summit Longs Peak via the "Casual Route" on the East Face, also known as "the Diamond." At some point, the two climbers became "stranded" and could not complete their climb or self-rescue. They were also unprepared for cold temperatures that night. They were able to reach park staff, who kept in touch with them throughout the evening and started a rescue the following morning. NPS staff were able to reach the party and assist them in a descent of the North Face of Longs Peak. Source: [Rocky Mountain National Park](#)

### **Rocky Mountain National Park Hiker fatality**

On July 17, a 51-year-old was found unresponsive by visitors one mile into the Mount Ida Trail. The visitors used a satellite device to contact emergency support and began CPR. Rangers also responded and administered lifesaving measures. Resuscitation efforts were not successful. The individual's body was extracted by litter and taken to the Grand County (CO) Coroner's Office to determine a cause of death. Other responders on the incident included Grand County Sheriff's Office, Grand County EMS, Grand Lake Fire, and Classic Air Medical. Source: [KNCO](#), [Rocky Mountain National Park](#)

### **Rocky Mountain National Park Bat fatality on fishing lure**

Recently, at Dream Lake, a bat got ensnared on a barbed fishing lure that had been abandoned by a previous angler, hanging in a tree. The bat was alive when NPS staff arrived but passed away shortly afterward. Barbed hooks are prohibited at the lake, where all fishing is catch-and-release. Source: [Rocky Mountain National Park Facebook page](#)

### **San Antonio Missions National Historical Park Vandalism**

On June 28, the historic Mission San José church was damaged, including the Rose Window. The NPS is looking for any information the public may be able to provide. Source: [KSAT](#)

### **Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area Black bear hit by car**

On July 20, BB-12, a black bear that had been recently discovered and radio collared in the park, was struck and killed by a vehicle on the 101 Freeway at the top of the Conejo Grade

between Newbury Park and Camarillo. A motorist called in the incident, and the bear was transferred to NPS custody by a park biologist. The bear previously had survived many highway crossings. Source: [Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area](#)

### **Saratoga National Historical Park**

#### **Flash flood**

On July 16, heavy storms created flash flooding in the park, causing "substantial damage" to the park's eastern entrance at Route 4 and at numerous locations along the park's hiking trails, including the Wilkinson Trail. The Route 4 entrance and all hiking trails in the park are currently closed for assessment and repairs. Source: [Saratoga National Historical Park](#)

### **Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks**

#### **Fire, attempted robbery, vandalism**

On July 14 at 5 AM, a vehicle fire was reported on the Generals Highway in the Giant Forest area. Rangers located the vehicle and found it "completely burned." While investigating the fire, a call came in about an individual who attempted to rob a visitor's cell phone, keys, and wallet by waving a knife and a stick. The visitor refused, and the suspect fled into the forest. Law enforcement attempted to locate the individual, and during that search, they found that the Giant Forest Museum had been broken into and damaged. It is unclear currently if some or all these incidents are related. A closure and shelter-in-place mandate were put into place temporarily. A suspect was found and arrested that evening. The closures were then lifted. The incident is under investigation by the NPS, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the U.S. Forest Service. The Giant Forest Museum remained closed for several days and has since reopened. Source: *Sierra Sun Times* ([7/15](#), [7/16](#))

### **Theodore Roosevelt National Park**

#### **Bison injury**

On July 15, a visitor was "severely injured" in the abdomen and foot by a bison at the Painted Canyon Trailhead. Staff from the NPS and Billings County (ND) Sheriff and Emergency Medical Services responded and treated the patient before an ambulance took them to a hospital in Dickinson. The patient was later transported to a hospital in Fargo. Source: [Theodore Roosevelt National Park](#)

### **Whiskeytown National Recreation Area**

#### **E. coli**

Water quality monitoring has revealed elevated levels of E. coli in Clear Creek in the Tower House Historic District. The NPS has advised visitors to avoid contact with the water within and around the Tower House Historic District, Clear Creek Picnic Area, and Coggins Flat. Water quality monitoring is ongoing. Source: [KRCR](#)

### **Yellowstone National Park**

#### **Unexploded ordnance**

On June 11, the park became aware of a 105mm ordinance that had been utilized for avalanche control but had not exploded. The item had rolled down a mountainside to "within

10 feet of the main route of travel in the park." The park contacted the U.S. Air Force's Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team from the 341st Civil Engineer Squadron, which was able to detonate the device close to where it rested. It was determined that the fuse had sheared off on impact, which caused it to malfunction and trigger incorrectly. Source: [Maelstrom Air Force Base](#)

### **Yellowstone National Park**

#### **Bison injury**

On July 16, a 47-year-old was walking with another visitor in a field in front of the Lake Lodge cabins on the north shore of Lake Yellowstone. Upon seeing two bison, the visitors turned to walk away from them. One of the bison charged and gored the 47-year-old. The individual sustained "significant injuries" to the chest and abdomen. The visitor was transported by helicopter to Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center. It is unclear how close to the bison the two individuals were when attacked, and the incident remains under investigation. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

### **Yellowstone National Park**

#### **Storm event**

On July 3, a storm brought high winds and rain to the southern area of the park, particularly the Lake Village area. Several hundred trees came down, including on buildings and vehicles. The hotel and clinic lost commercial power for approximately 24 hours before it was restored. Bridge Bay Campground and marina also lost power, which were restored later that week. Several cabins and a building were evacuated and remain closed for repairs. No fatalities or severe injuries were reported in the incident. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

### **Yosemite National Park**

#### **Wildfire**

On June 29, a lightning strike started a wildfire to the northwest of North Dome. As of July 21, the Pika Fire was 20% contained at 840 acres, and it is being managed by Yosemite Fire with a "confine and contain strategy." It is not currently threatening any structures. Source: [SF Gate](#), [Yosemite National Park](#)

### **Yosemite National Park**

#### **Backpacker fatality**

On July 2, a 24-year-old went missing after entering Chilnualna Creek near Upper Chilnualna Falls. The individual had been backpacking with a group at the time. They were said to have been getting their face wet while kneeling on hands and knees before slipping into the creek. A search for the individual ensued, and they were found deceased on July 9. The official cause of death has not yet been determined but is "presumed to be accidental drowning." Source: [NBC News](#)

### **Yosemite National Park**

#### **Missing hiker found**

On July 22, a 22-year-old went out for a day hike, headed west from the Ostrander Lake Ski

Hut area, and didn't return to camp that evening. A search ensued and the individual was found on July 24 in good condition "with just a few scrapes." Source: [Fresno Bee](#)

## **Zion National Park**

### **Separated teen rescued**

On July 18, while on a hiking and tubing trip with family in the Narrows, a 14-year-old became separated between two factions of the group. During that time, they thought they were following familiar footsteps and began traveling up the wrong canyon. They also removed their shoes at one point in order to scramble up a section, leaving them behind. Both factions of the group thought the individual was with the other group, and the slower group had an ill, injured member that impeded progress, so it took many hours for the group to realize the individual had been separated. They alerted the NPS, who was unable to start a search that night. The following morning, a separate visitor group of two also took the same wrong turn and came upon the teenager. The party of two helped the teenager walk three miles downstream without shoes before an NPS rescue team was able to take over. Source: [Fox 13](#)

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

- *Cape Cod National Seashore* — The 94-year-old individual who was evicted from their summer use of one of the dune shacks going up for lease in the Peaked Hill Bars Historic District (see [7/5/23 Coalition Report](#)) was offered a 2-year special use permit by the National Park Service to continue using the shack. The individual and their family declined the special use permit, citing that they wanted the NPS to cancel all the leases and other evictions. Source: [The Provincetown Independent](#)
- *Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area* — On July 10, the park reopened the section of river in the park, from Powers Island, downstream. On July 19, the park reopened the rest of the remaining closures. The area was closed due to E. coli contamination coming from the Big Creek Water Reclamation Facility (see [7/5/23 Coalition Report](#)). The river has now tested at safe levels for recreation. Source: [Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area \(7/10, 7/19\)](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - On July 20, the NPS and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service euthanized a five-year-old grizzly bear who had obtained food multiple times from humans and was becoming increasingly aggressive (see [7/5/23 Coalition Report](#)). It is the first food-conditioned bear the park has had to euthanize since 2009. Source: [Glacier National Park](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - The park has released further details about the individual who was found deceased in a vehicle on Craig Pass on May 13 (see [5/24/23 Coalition Report](#)). The Teton County (WY) Coroner's Office determined that the deceased individual, age 38, died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Another individual at the scene, found standing in the road adjacent to the car, which was in a snowbank, was arrested for drug possession and other traffic-related charges. The incident remains under investigation. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* — Tioga Road reopened on July 22. Due to record winter

storms, it is the latest the road has ever opened after its annual closure; the previous record was July 8. Infrastructure damage is extensive and visitors are cautioned that there will likely be delays for road repairs and limited services available. Source: [Enterprise-Record](#)

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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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