

[View this email in your web browser.](#)



The Coalition Report
Wednesday, March 8, 2023

Editor Note: Due to incorrect source material, in the February 22, 2023 Coalition Report, we reported that Amy Jean (Kipp) Miller (deceased) worked at the Beaver Meadows entrance station. However, Amy worked for the Rocky Mountain Conservancy at the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center. Thank you to Larry Frederick for the correction.

Coalition Actions

The [Parks Channel](#) is seeking volunteers to participate in a new web video series called "Ranger Time." Questions will be submitted by users, prescreened, and asked by a presenter. The videos will be recorded remotely on Zoom, then posted once a week to the [Parks Channel](#) website, [YouTube](#), and other social media platforms. More information can be found [here](#). To volunteer, please contact info@theparkschannel.com.

Coalition Chair Mike Murray was quoted in a [National Parks Traveler article](#) discussing the National Park Service's approach to fees in light of a lawsuit filed against [Recreation.gov](#) and the additional fees charged by the contractor administering the site (see more in National/Regional NPS Updates below).

Nearly 250 Coalition Members signed the [letter](#) to Interior Department Secretary Deb Haaland, which accompanied transmittal of the Coalition's report, "Action Needed to Protect National Parks from Oil and Gas Development."

The Coalition joined with numerous organizations in a [letter](#) to Secretary Haaland urging the Department of the Interior to finalize new regulations for the federal oil and gas lease program. Among others, the recommendations include strengthening the bonding and

reclamation framework, limiting speculator participation which results in wasteful leasing, utilizing a formal nomination process to better allocate staff resources, facilitating robust public and Tribal participation, and eliminating noncompetitive leasing.

The Coalition's workgroup with the Association of National Park Rangers and the National Parks Conservation Association that considers workforce issues sent a [letter](#) to NPS Director Chuck Sams. The letter expresses support for his efforts to address the workforce. Additionally, it pledges to advocate for adequate funding for parks; comparable pay rates for the same work done at similar federal agencies; improvements to employee orientation, leadership training, and housing; and pursuing solutions to longstanding morale issues.

Coalition Chair Mike Murray's [op-ed](#), "Checking in on America the Beautiful," was published in *National Parks Traveler*. The article encourages action to fulfill the goals of the 30 X 30 initiative.

We joined [comments](#) to the Bureau of Land Management on its solar and wind energy programmatic environmental impact statement, encouraging protection of Japanese-American historic sites, including Minidoka National Historic Site, from renewable energy siting.

The Coalition submitted extensive [comments](#) to the U.S. Global Change Research Program in response to its request for information on framing the National Nature Assessment.

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.

- *2022 NPS visitation report* - On February 27, the National Park Service released the 2022 Visitation Report. The report showed, among other trends, that overall park visitation rebounded toward pre-pandemic levels and many lesser-known parks and off-seasons in popular parks had record numbers due to NPS marketing efforts. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Junk fee lawsuit against Recreation.gov* - A \$5 million class-action lawsuit has been filed against Booz Allen, the company that manages *Recreation.gov*, regarding processing, lottery, and cancellation fees. The lawsuit claims fees are excessive and that they have been improperly administered because the public hasn't been given an opportunity to review and comment on fees. Booz Allen has until March 10 to respond to the complaint. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *\$85.15 million for historic preservation* - On February 24, the NPS announced the distribution of \$85.15 million in historic preservation grants to over 200 Tribal and

State Historic Preservation Offices. The grants come from the Historic Preservation Fund, which is supported by revenue from the outer continental shelf oil and gas leases. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)

- *Lawsuit against Antiquities Act* - *The New York Times* ran [an op-ed](#) by John Leshy, an emeritus professor at the University of California - San Francisco College of Law, arguing against the State of Utah's current lawsuit challenging the restoration of Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears National Monument in 2021. The op-ed chronicles the history of the Antiquities Act and the Supreme Court's previous rulings. Source: *The New York Times*
- *Homestead Act Story Map* - The National Park Service has created [a story map](#) of the Homestead Act of 1862, as experienced through three Kentuckians. Source: *ArcGIS Online*
- *"Controlled burns won't save all of California from wildfire"* - *Knowable Magazine* published [an interview](#) with U.S. Geological Survey fire ecologist Jon Keeley. Jon argues that there are two types of megafires in California, forest fires based on fire-suppressed fuel loads and wind-driven fires in chaparral zones, which need to be managed differently. Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks and Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area are both referenced in the article. Source: *Knowable Magazine*
- *Deadliest national park units* - According to an *NBC News* analysis of federal data, North Cascades National Park has the highest death rate in the National Park System. They have had 3.7 deaths for every 100,000 visitors from 2007 to 2021. The next two were Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks (1.09 deaths and 0.99 deaths per 100,000 visitors, respectively). The causes of death were not listed, though an NPS spokesperson said that "slips, trips, falls, drownings, and car accidents" are common ways visitors in parks get hurt and that the data is preliminary and subject to change after review. The article considers whether North Cascades' higher death rate is due to a ban on fixed climbing anchors. Source: [NBC News](#)
- *"Ending National Parks"* - *yes! Magazine* published an article about the idea of returning national parks to Tribal sovereignty, including a history of park establishment, co-stewardship agreements currently in place, and the viability of allowing more traditional practices within parks. Source: [yes!](#)
- *"Most filmed locations in every state"* - *HawaiianIslands.com* published [an article](#) documenting the most filmed locations in each U.S. state, based on data from *IMDB*. Many National Park Service locations were on the list, including Yellowstone National Park (Wyoming), Glacier National Park (Montana), Acadia National Park (Maine), Pearl Harbor National Memorial (Hawai'i), and New River Gorge National Park and Preserve (West Virginia). Source: *HawaiianIslands.com*

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Acadia National Park* - The NPS has awarded a \$32.6 million contract to Nickerson & O'Day, Inc., of Bangor, Maine, to demolish unsafe structures and build new maintenance facilities at the park's headquarters. Work is expected to begin this spring and be completed in Fall 2024. The project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [Mainebiz](#)
- *Assateague Island National Seashore* - The park honored Jim Bell with the 2022 Superintendent's Award for his work operating the park's water and wastewater treatment plant. The park also honored Chris Fitzgerald with the 2022 Safety Award for his work revamping safety protocols and standard operating procedures that use heavy construction equipment. Source: [Assateague Island National Seashore](#)
- *Baltimore-Washington Parkway* - The parkway is making safety improvements, including replacement and installation of signs, guardrail repair, and the addition of mile markers. Work is expected to be completed this summer. Periodic lane closures will take place during non-rush-hour periods. Source: [CBS News](#)
- *Big Cypress National Preserve* - Mike Roof, the South Florida Fire and Aviation - Big Cypress Helicopter Program Manager, was honored with the 2022 National Park Service Excellence in Mentorship Aviation Award. Source: [Big Cypress National Preserve](#)
- *Biscayne National Park* - On February 21, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission approved a rule to prohibit the placement of recreation and commercial traps within the Legare Anchorage site, located east of Elliot Key. The site is 1.2 square miles and includes sensitive cultural resources. Source: [Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission](#)
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - The Mitchell County (NC) Chamber Board announced that it will terminate its current lease with the NPS for the Mitchell County Visitor Center on May 1. The county recently established a Travel and Tourism Development Authority, so the chamber will no longer receive occupancy tax funds, which have supported the visitor center. The NPS will have the option to pursue a lease with the authority's board to keep the visitor center open. Source: [Mitchell News-Journal](#)
- *Chaco Culture National Historical Park, White Sands National Park* - The *Albuquerque Journal* published [an article](#) about a new podcast series geared toward children in third- to twelfth-grades called, "A Brief History of the American Southwest for Kids." Each podcast comes with a "Learn Along Guide" that meets national education standards. The first episode begins with the early history of humans in the region, based on fossilized footprints at White Sands. The second episode focuses on Chaco Canyon. Source: *Albuquerque Journal*

- *Chamizal National Memorial* - On February 14, the park signed an agreement with Parque Chamizal in Ciudad Juárez in Chihuahua, Mexico, to officially recognize one another as "sister parks." The two parks were established concurrently in 1967 to commemorate the historic 1963 Chamizal Treaty, which returned the long-disputed Chamizal area to Mexico. The new agreement will allow for new opportunities for ongoing collaboration. Source: [Chamizal National Memorial](#)
- *Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area* - On February 24, a new film starring Keri Russell, O'Shea Jackson, Jr., and Ray Liotta, "Cocaine Bear," was released. It is loosely based on a true story of a black bear that ingested cocaine from a duffel bag that had been dropped from a plane into the park by a drug smuggler in 1985. In the film, the bear goes on a killing spree and lives happily ever after. In real life, the bear did not kill anyone and its activities after ingesting cocaine are unknown; the bear was found deceased among "40 unopened plastic containers with traces of cocaine." An autopsy revealed the bear had absorbed three or four grams of cocaine into its bloodstream, and may have eaten more. Source: [The New York Times](#), [Screen Rant](#)
- *Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park* - The park will soon begin stabilization efforts on the Level 33 dry-laid stone wall just across the Potomac River from Harpers Ferry at mile marker 61.5 of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. The wall is currently deteriorating, creating unsafe conditions on the public roadway. Harpers Ferry Road between Hoffmaster Road and the school bus turnaround on Sandy Hook Road will be closed with detours temporarily. Source: [Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park](#)
- *Colonial National Historical Park* - The park will soon begin rehabilitating 10.3 miles of the Colonial Parkway, including new road surface, bridge and tunnel rehabilitation, culvert fixes, stabilized shoulders, and stormwater management. The \$122.8 million project is being funded through the Great American Outdoors Act in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration. The contract was awarded to Wagman-JMT Design-Build. Construction is expected to start later this year with completion in 2026. Some closures and detours will be required during the project. Source: [Colonial National Historical Park](#)
- *Colonial National Historical Park* - The park will soon begin repairs and stabilization on three miles of York River shoreline that have severe erosion. The erosion threatens archaeological sites and the stability and alignment of the Colonial Parkway. The \$11.2 million project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. The contract was awarded to Coastal Design and Construction, Inc., from Gloucester, Virginia. The project is expected to take 16 months and there will be temporary closures during construction. Source: [Colonial National Historical Park](#)
- *Colonial National Historical Park* - Archaeologists at the park will be utilizing ground

- penetrating radar and conducting excavations to learn more about the enslaved individuals who worked on Jamestown Island during the 18th-century. The project is being funded through the NPS' Civil Rights Initiative. The work also will include a series of workshops and meetings with descendants or others who may have family knowledge of that era in the island's history. Visitors also have the opportunity to interact with archaeologists and artifacts. Source: [Colonial National Historical Park](#)
- *Cumberland Island National Seashore* - Senator Jon Ossoff (D-GA) and U.S. Representative Buddy Carter (R-GA) wrote a letter to Department of the Interior Secretary Deb Haaland asking for the DOI to prioritize funding for an erosion study impacting the park. Sea level rise and storms are eroding the beach. A U.S. Geological Survey study from 2016 estimated the island would erode approximately 120 feet inland by the end of the 21st-century. Source: [Savannah Morning News](#)
 - *Fire Island National Seashore* - In October, a 13-foot square piece of wreckage was spotted offshore of Fire Island. NPS staff suspect it may be a piece of the SS *Savannah*, an early 19th-century vessel that was the first known ship to cross the Atlantic Ocean. Two years after that crossing, in 1821, the ship ran aground and broke apart. Various efforts to locate the ship have been made, but no one ever found anything definitive. The wreckage piece is currently in the custody of the Fire Island Lighthouse Preservation Society, and the NPS is working with subject matter experts to analyze its origins. Source: [CarolinaCoastOnline/Associated Press](#)
 - *Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve* - On February 10 and 11, respectively, the Allakaket and Huslia Tribal Councils passed resolutions withdrawing from the Ambler Road project lawsuit. The lawsuit was filed by a consortium of Tribal governments and the Tanana Chiefs Conference against the Department of the Interior to stop the Ambler Road project, which was approved (and litigated) in 2020. The proposal is a 211-mile gravel road that would include Bureau of Land Management land, as well as a section of Gates of the Arctic and Tribal land owned by the Koyukon, Iñupiat, and Tanana Athabascan Tribes. A statement by the two Tribal councils that withdrew said that they were trying to balance their traditional lifestyle and environmental protection with future economic opportunities. Source: [Anchorage Daily News](#)
 - *Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve* - The park awarded a \$16.7 million construction contract to Ahtna and the Unit Company to replace the Bartlett Cove concession housing, which is undersized and in very poor condition. The project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act and will begin in mid-April. Source: [Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve](#)
 - *Glacier National Park* - The park will reopen the Avalanche Campground this spring for the first time since 2020. Source: [Glacier National Park](#)
 - *Glacier National Park* - The park has announced a new advance reservation

- wilderness camping permit system via *Recreation.gov*. The system is first-come, first-served, as opposed to the previous system, which was a lottery. The new system only allows groups of one to four campers per permit, except for a single day of applications for mid-size and large group permits on *Pay.gov* on March 1. 30% of all permits will still be available for walk-up the day before or day of the trip's start date. Source: [Glacier National Park](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - A recent parkwide survey for Canada lynx by Washington State University found 50 individuals, which exceeded expectations. The study suggests "the park could provide a much-needed climate refuge for the cats in the future." Source: [Science Daily](#)
 - *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - *E&E News* published [an article](#) chronicling the status of evaporation of Colorado River water and how it plays a major role in the implementation of the 1922 Colorado River Compact. Source: *E&E News*
 - *Grand Canyon National Park* - The *Williams-Grand Canyon News* ran [an interview/profile](#) with Brandi Stewart, the park's education specialist. Source: *Williams-Grand Canyon News*
 - *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - The *Citizen Times* ran [an article](#) about the park's ongoing efforts to use ground-penetrating radar to identify remains of Black residents in the park, conduct oral histories, and better tell stories about the Black experience in the region. Source: *Citizen Times*
 - *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - The park is currently doing a pilot program for license plate readers at its entrance stations to collect data that can be used for overdue hikers, missing persons, and BOLO (be on look out) requests from outside agencies. The American Civil Liberties Union has stated publicly that they believe the data collection is government surveillance overreach. Source: [WBIR](#)
 - *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - In a closed session at the end of February, the Swain County (NC) Board of County Commissioners decided to direct County Manager Kevin King to look into hiring an attorney in opposition to the park's Park It Forward Program, which began on March 1. The program now requires paid parking permits along the parkway for all visitors stopping for longer than 15 minutes in the park. Source: [The Southern Scoop](#)
 - *Gulf Islands National Seashore* - On March 4, Pensacola Bay City Ferry cruises returned for the first time since Hurricane Sally hit in 2020. The two 150-passenger ferryboats are owned by the NPS and operated by City Experiences by Hornblower. Source: [Pensacola News Journal](#)
 - *Haleakalā National Park* - On March 6, contractors began installing a new drain field

system for the visitor center restrooms at the Summit District. The project is being funded through park entrance fees. Source: [Haleakalā National Park](#)

- *Historic Preservation Training Center* - The Harrison Goodall Preservation Fellowship is now accepting applications. The fellowship is supported by the Campaign for Historic Trades and Preservation Maryland. It provides a \$10,000 award toward innovative projects in the historic preservation field. Source: 2/27/23 *Green and Grey Report*, [Historic Preservation Training Center](#)
- *Jimmy Carter National Historical Park* - Superintendent Jill Stuckey was [interviewed by WALB](#) about the recent influx of visitors to the park, in honor of former President Jimmy Carter, who recently entered hospice care. Source: *WALB*
- *Kobuk Valley National Park* - The park recently transitioned to wind energy at the Northwest Arctic Heritage Center. The building previously was heated using heating oil, consuming 5,100 gallons annually. The park invested \$175,000 to install new energy-efficient electric boilers, which are powered by the Kotzebue wind farm through a partnership with the Kotzebue Electric Association. This will decrease energy costs by 40%. Source: [Kobuk Valley National Park](#)
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - The park recently completed a renovation of the Katherine Landing marina on Lake Mohave, including improvements to the headwalk, an ADA gangway, and a new fuel dock. The work was completed by Bellingham Marine. Source: [Marina Dock Age](#)
- *Mount Rainier National Park* - The park is digitizing much of its historic short film collection and [posting them weekly](#) in 2023. Source: 2/27/23 *Green and Grey Report*
- *Natchez National Historical Park* - The park has started a project to upgrade the visitor center, including roof rehabilitation, HVAC replacement, a lobby redesign, and new exhibits. The visitor center will remain open during construction through at least September 2023, and then further updates will be given about operations. Source: [The Natchez Democrat](#)
- *New Philadelphia National Historic Site* - On February 28, the New Philadelphia Association signed a letter of intent to donate 34 acres of the site of New Philadelphia to the National Park Service. The association has stewarded the site for 27 years and will continue to maintain the site until the legal transfer is complete. The site was established as a unit of the National Park Service in December 2022. Another nine acres from the Archaeological Conservancy are likely to be transferred to the NPS in the future. Source: [Herald-Whig](#)
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - On February 27, a federal judge ruled in favor of the NPS and against the Animal Legal Defense Fund in its claim that the park had

violated the Administrative Procedure Act by not updating its 1980 management plan for Tomales Point and its elk population. The plaintiff argued that the elk population was dying due to drought conditions and the park's fencing that prevents them from finding water elsewhere. The court stated that the plaintiffs could not demonstrate that the NPS had a "nondiscretionary duty to act" and that the agency had discretion to its own wildlife management and planning processes. Source: [Courthouse News Service](#)

- *Prince William Forest Park* - The park is improving wastewater systems at Turkey Run Ridge Group Campground, Cabin Camp 3, and Oak Ridge Campground this year. There will be temporary closures as the work is enacted. Source: [Prince William Forest Park](#)
- *San Antonio Missions National Historical Park* - The park has begun preservation and repair work on the historic Espada Aqueduct, including repairing leaks and removing sediment and debris. The \$290,000 project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act and executed by park staff, the NPS Historic Preservation Training Center, and the Texas Conservation Corps. It is expected to be complete this month. Source: [San Antonio Missions National Historical Park](#)
- *Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* - On February 28, the Los Angeles County (CA) Board of Supervisors passed a motion asking the State of California to ban first-generation anticoagulant rodenticides, which have had deleterious effects on mountain lions throughout the region. (Second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides were banned by the state in 2020.) The board has directed county departments to stop using them on county-owned and -managed properties, and in unincorporated county regions. Source: [Los Angeles Daily News](#)
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Yosemite National Park* - A new study by researchers at Stanford University shows that in Sierra Nevada forests, the mean elevation of conifers has shifted 112 feet upslope since the 1930s, while the temperatures most suitable for conifers have shifted nearly 600 feet upslope. This evidence potentially shows that change is happening on such a rapid scale as to make adaptation difficult. Large wildfires, in particular, may allow conifer forests to be replaced by other vegetation rather quickly. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument* - *E&E News* published [an article](#) about delays to the proposed 470-mile Greenlink West solar transmission line due to a 1.5-mile section through Tule Springs Fossil Beds that has "deposits deemed to have a high likelihood of vertebrate fossil presence," including those of a woolly mammoth. The deposits were discovered by a third-party contractor in collaboration with the NPS senior paleontologist and two U.S. Geological Survey geologists, and written up in a report in October 2022 that was recently obtained through a public records request by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility. The draft Environmental Impact Statement for the project has been

delayed due to the report and is expected to go to public comment later this year.

Source: *E&E News*

- *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - The park is seeking proposals for an individual to create artwork for the park's Junior Ranger program booklet. Proposals are due March 15. Source: [KRQE](#)
- *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - On April 1, the park will begin charging a fee for fishing permits in the park: \$20 for an adult annual pass, \$10 for a youth annual pass, \$5 for an adult 7-day pass, and \$3 for a youth 7-day pass. A New Mexico fishing license is also required. The fees will help the park better manage the fishing program and support fishing recreation. Source: [Valles Caldera National Preserve](#)
- *Voyageurs National Park* - The park has issued a prospectus for the operation of Kettle Falls Hotel and associated services, such as retail, boat rental and portage, marina services, guest transportation, and food and beverage sales. It is the only NPS lodging facility within the park and is accessible only by boat or float plane. The contract will last for 10 years, starting January 1, 2024. Proposals are due April 13. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve* - *Alaska Public Media* published [an article](#) about the retreat of glaciers and its effects on parks and local tourism. Wrangell-St. Elias glaciologist Mike Loso is quoted in the article. Source: *Alaska Public Media*
- *Yellowstone National Park* - The park released a 2023 "State of the Park" report, including updates about the 2022 flood event, the park's 150th anniversary commemoration, and goals for the next two years. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - The *Idaho Capital Sun* published [an article](#) about the park's first U.S. Geological Survey studies, which are "surprisingly accurate to this day." Source: *Idaho Capital Sun*

Personnel Changes

- *Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Curecanti National Recreation Area* - Stuart West has been selected as the new superintendent of the two parks, as well as the supervisor for the superintendent of Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument. He has over 35 years of NPS experience, most recently as the superintendent of Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site, Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site, Amache National Historic Site, and Capulin Volcano National Monument. Stuart began his new role on February 27. Source: [Curecanti National Recreation Area](#)

- *Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument* - Fermin Salas has been selected as the new superintendent. Fermin has over 35 years of NPS experience, most recently as the division manager of interpretation and visitor services at Pipe Spring National Monument. He began his new role on February 27. Source: [Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument](#)
- *Manassas National Battlefield Park* - Kristofer "Kris" Butcher has been selected as the new superintendent. Kris has 19 years of federal service, most recently as the superintendent at Birmingham Civil Rights and Freedom Riders National Monuments. He will begin his new role on April 24. Source: [Manassas National Battlefield 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

- Katherine (Kathy) Andrews Thebus Betts, 92, passed away on February 6. She was married to Frank Betts, a 30-year NPS employee who also recently passed away. They lived with their family in six national park units. Kathy and Frank volunteered for 15 years with the Association of National Park Rangers, providing many financial workshops for NPS employees. Source: Rick Smith, [Vessey Funeral Service](#)
- Rick Nolan passed away in August 2022. He worked at Colorado National Monument, Devils Tower National Monument, Capitol Reef National Park, Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine, Pecos National Historical Park, and Redwoods National Park. Source: Rick Smith
- Elizabeth "Betsy" Sperry Shehigian, 61, passed away on February 9. She worked for a time in performing arts management at Wolftrap National Park for the Performing Arts. Source: [South Haven Tribune](#)
- Jock Whitworth passed away in July 2022. Jock served as the superintendent of Zion National Park from 2003 until his retirement in 2014, and also worked at many other national park units. Source: Dwayne Collier, [Zion Forever](#)

In the News

- Jane Allen has been selected as the new Tribal Relations Specialist for the Sierra National Forest. She has 35 years of federal service, including work as a Tribal Liaison and as an archaeologist at several National Park Service units, including Yosemite National Park, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Lassen Volcanic National Park, and Lava Beds National Monument. Source: [Sierra News Online](#)

- Costa Dillon's 1978 film, "Attack of the Killer Tomatoes," has been turned into a novel by Jeff Strand. Costa is a retired NPS superintendent and Coalition Member. Source: [JoBlo](#)
- Elliot Nauert has joined the North Carolina State University Extension Forestry department as an extension associate in prescribed fire and fire science. Elliot worked for a time as a firefighter for Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. He is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in the Department of Psychology at North Carolina State, doing research on expertise, particularly in the context of wildland firefighting. Source: [NC State University College of Natural Resources News](#)

Open for Comment

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

- *Alaska Region* - Public comment is [open until March 10](#) on a proposal to reverse the 2020 Alaska Hunting and Trapping rule on national preserve lands in Alaska. The rule currently allows specific sport hunting practices, including bear baiting across the state of Alaska, and this reversal of the regulation would only apply to national preserves. Source: [National Park Service Alaska Region](#)
- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - Public comment is [open until March 28](#) on the environmental assessment and wetland statement of finding for construction of a multi-use pathway along Lighthouse Road. Source: [WITN](#)
- *Death Valley National Park* - Public comment is [open until March 25](#) on a proposed replacement of the Salt Creek Boardwalk Trail. The trail was damaged in flashfloods in August 2022. Public comment is required because some infrastructure debris is in designated Wilderness and the new boardwalk will need a new alignment due to changes in the creek. Source: [Inyo Register](#)
- *Denali National Park and Preserve* - Public comment is [open until March 30](#) on a proposal to build 17 miles of trails in the non-Wilderness area of the park between George Parks Highway and the Nenana River on the eastern end of the park. Source: [Denali National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve* - Public comment is [open until March 17](#) on a draft Backcountry and Wilderness Management Plan. The park has created [a storymap](#) to inform the public comment process. Source: [Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Grand Canyon National Park* - The Bureau of Reclamation has opened public comment on [a draft environmental assessment](#) for flow strategies to mitigate the threat of smallmouth bass on ecosystems below Glen Canyon Dam. Comments can be sent in via email. Source: [St. George News](#)

- *Joshua Tree National Park* - The California State Parks Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division has [opened public comment through May 1](#) for 2023 restoration grant applications. Joshua Tree has prepared an application requesting funds to mitigate illegal off-road driving activities in the park, including monitoring, law enforcement patrols, educational products, and fencing. Source: [Joshua Tree National Park](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - Public comment is [open until April 5](#) on a plan to rehabilitate the Tidal Basin and West Potomac seawalls. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *North Cascades National Park* - Public comment is [open until March 8](#) on an environmental assessment for two projects: 1) a rerouting of the Brush Creek Trail and 2) a relocation of the Graybeal Hiker and Stock Camps and the construction of additional backcountry accommodations at Six Mile Camp and Bridge Creek Camp. Source: [North Cascades National Park](#)
- *Padre Island National Seashore* - Public comment is [open until March 14](#) on possible beach management options ("pre-NEPA civic engagement") at the park. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Reconstruction Era National Historical Park* - Public comment is [open until March 17](#) on preliminary general management plan concepts. Source: [Reconstruction Era National Historical Park](#)
- *Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway* - Public comment is [open until March 15](#) on management and visitor opportunities at Fairy Falls Day Use Area. Source: [Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway](#)
- *Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open until March 30](#) on an Accessibility Self Evaluation and Transition Plan. Source: [Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area](#)
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - Public comment is [open until March 18](#) on a plan to re-seed severely burned giant sequoia groves in the two parks. Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#)
- *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - The park is inviting public comment about the unique character and value of its rivers and creeks in order to be considered for Wild and Scenic River status. Comments can be submitted via email or mail. Source: [Valles Caldera National Preserve](#)
- *Virgin Islands National Park* - Public comment has been [extended until March 15](#) 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 constructed 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, The St. Thomas Source](#)

- *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](#)

Other Department of the Interior News

- *Bison stewardship* - On March 3, the Department of the Interior announced new steps to restore populations of American bison and the prairie grassland ecosystem, including \$25 million in funding from the Inflation Reduction Act. Secretary's Order 3410 establishes an interagency Bison Working Group that will create a Bison Shared Stewardship Plan, as well as a Bison Management Apprenticeship program under the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Funding will help establish new bison herds, create co-stewardship agreements, and restore native grassland ecosystems. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Mining project threatens Okefenokee* - *The New York Times* ran [an op-ed](#) about an application by Twin Pines Minerals to build a strip mine three miles from the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. The op-ed argues that the strip mine's effects on the wildlife refuge will be catastrophic, both on a local and global scale due to the vast resources of carbon currently stored in the swamp that could be disturbed if the water levels are altered. The author also argues that the mining company's hydrology study is outdated. The Georgia Environmental Protection Division is accepting comments on the project through March 20. Source: *The New York Times*
- *Provo Delta Restoration* - On March 2, the Department of the Interior celebrated a major milestone in the Provo River Delta Restoration project: the diversion of the Provo River into channels and ponds to connect the river and a restored delta with Utah Lake. The new delta will support sensitive fish species, improve water reliability for residents, and improve recreation in the region. The \$10 million project was funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$116 million for conservation projects* - On March 1, the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture, and Defense, Native Americans in Philanthropy, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation announced the 2023 Request for Proposals for the America the Beautiful Challenge. The program funds locally-led conservation and restoration projects. They expect to award up to \$116 million in grants. Pre-proposals are due April 20. Awards are expected to be announced in November 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.

House Actions

February 27 – The Speaker pro tempore laid before the House a letter from Rep. Jim Costa (D-CA), whereby he resigned from the Committee on Natural Resources, effective today. The resignation was accepted.

February 27 – The House agreed to H. Res. 164, which elected several members to standing committees of the House of Representatives to the Committee on Natural Resources.

Incidents

Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.

Acadia National Park

Vandalism

An individual has spray painted red blazes onto trees, rocks, and cairns on the Spring, South Ridge Penobscot, Penobscot East, and Deer Brook trails. The park has said that these blazes create confusion because the NPS has marked trails with blue blazes. The markings are considered vandalism. The park is working to fix the damage and the investigation is ongoing. They have asked for any information the public can provide.

Source: [News Center Maine](#)

Arches National Park

Hiker fatality

On February 24, a 71-year-old visitor collapsed while hiking with family. Rescuers from Classic Air Medical, the NPS, Bureau of Land Management, and Grand County (UT) responded. Rescuers attempted to resuscitate the individual, but they were unsuccessful. The incident is under investigation by the NPS and Grand County. Source: [Arches](#)

[National Park](#)

Big Bend National Park

Small wildfire

On February 23, a power pole fell, creating a power outage and a small wildfire along the

road into Chisos Basin. NPS fire personnel responded and were able to stop the Green Gulch Fire within a couple hours at one-quarter of an acre. Rio Grande Electric arrived the next morning and replaced the pole and repaired the lines. Source: [Big Bend National Park](#)

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area Vandalism

Devils Cave was recently "heavily graffitied." The NPS is looking for any information the public may have. Source: [The Independent Herald](#)

Chickasaw National Recreation Area 7-year-old saves younger brother

On March 4, an individual with three young grandchildren and a dog were hiking on the Rock Creek Trail when the dog jumped down onto a ledge on the side of the cliff. One of the children, a 3 year old, followed the dog, and then toppled over the cliff. The individual's older sibling, 7 years old, jumped after to help. Both individuals fell 100 feet down the cliff into a creek. The older sibling pulled the younger sibling's head out of the water, likely saving their life. NPS staff were able to respond within 10 minutes to help the children. The younger of the two children received head and face injuries, two broken ribs, and a fractured wrist, and remains in the Oklahoma University Children's Hospital with a feeding tube, catheter, and IVs. The older child received lacerations to the head and knee, and is now at home. Source: [KXII](#)

Dry Tortugas National Park More refugee arrivals

On February 23, a group of 22 people arrived at the park by boat, seeking refugee status from Cuba. About 300 migrants previously arrived to the park at the end of 2022 (see [January 11, 2023 Coalition Report](#)), requiring the park to temporarily close for processing. Source: [Miami Herald](#)

Fire Island National Seashore Lighthouse closure

On March 4, an exterior panel on the northeast side of the Fire Island Lighthouse separated from the structure. Though the damage is mostly cosmetic, the park closed the terrace on the north side and the boardwalks leading to the north side of the lighthouse, as well as the building itself, until further notice. The park is looking into emergency repair options to stabilize the outer façade. Source: [Fire Island National Seashore](#)

Fort Donelson National Battlefield Storm closure

On March 3, a severe storm passed through the park, felling trees and sending debris in the air during winds in excess of 60 miles per hour. The park was closed for safety and debris cleanup. On March 4, the park reopened. Source: Fort Donelson National Battlefield ([press release](#), [Facebook post](#))

George Washington Parkway **Abandoned vehicle removal**

On March 5, the NPS closed the northbound lanes of the parkway from Spout Run Parkway to Chain Bridge Road, VA-123, to remove an abandoned vehicle below the road near the Potomac River. They also temporarily closed parts of the Potomac Heritage Trail. The car left the road during a snowstorm in January 2022. At the time of the accident, the driver was trapped inside the car and suspended upside down, and sustained a broken arm and leg. They were extracted via a Washington, D.C., fire boat. Source: [ARL Now](#)

Grand Canyon National Park **Hiker fatality**

On February 17, a 56-year-old was found unresponsive on the Bright Angel Trail below Havasupai Gardens. NPS Search and Rescue personnel responded and determined that the individual was deceased. The individual was attempting to day hike from the rim to the Colorado River and back. The NPS is investigating in coordination with the Coconino County Medical Examiner. Source: [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#)

Joshua Tree National Park **Visitor found guilty for trespassing on archaeology site**

On February 20, a 34-year-old was found guilty and sentenced for one misdemeanor count of illegally entering an archaeological resource in the park. The individual entered a rock shelter and walked over other features of the archaeology site at Barker Dam Petroglyphs, including a "milling station." The individual has been fined \$540 and banned from all national parks for a year. Source: [Desert Sun](#)

Mammoth Cave National Park **Park closures**

On March 5, the park closed the visitor center, cave tours, Green River Ferry, Mammoth Cave Campground, and all secondary roads due to storm damage. There were many downed trees in the park, as well as widespread power and internet outages. On March 7, the park reopened the visitor center, cave tours, and the Green River Ferry. The campground also reopened, though there is no power in the restrooms. Flint Ridge, Joppa Ridge, North Houchins, Ugly Creek, and Dennison Ferry Road remain closed, as of March 7. Park trails remain open, though visitors are advised to use caution because they have not been cleared. Source: [WCLU](#), [Mammoth Cave National Park](#)

Rocky Mountain National Park

Feds sue water company

On February 27, the Department of the Interior sued the Water Supply and Storage Company for the rupture of a culvert in June 2017 that damaged a large swathe of land in the Lady Creek flood plain. The culvert is supposed to hold back water in the Grand River Ditch System, diverting water east to the Front Range and Eastern Plains. When the culvert ruptured, it damaged more than two acres of forest, stream, riparian, and wetland areas through extensive erosion and deposition of rocks and sediment. It also damaged a hiking trail and took out 100% of the vegetation in the area. The DOI is asking for payment for the damages and that the Grand River Gulch be condemned and sold to pay for those damages. A similar incident occurred in 2003 and the company was required to pay \$9 million in damages in 2008. Source: [Denver Post](#)

Washita Battlefield National Historic Site

Storm closure

On February 27, the Washita Battlefield headquarters and maintenance complex, its parking lot, and the Dust and Fire Trail closed due to severe storm damage, including the loss of power, destruction of several maintenance buildings, and loss of about a dozen vehicles and trailers. No employees were hurt in the incident. They were expected to remain closed through at least March 6. The Battlefield Overlook and trail were undamaged and remain open. Source: [Washita Battlefield National Historic Site](#)

Yosemite National Park

Record storms close park

On February 25, the park closed due to severe weather conditions and the prediction of further storms. Roads inside the park have remained open for administrative use only. On February 28, Yosemite Valley tallied 40 inches of snow, breaking its record for single-day snowfall. As of March 7, the park was still closed while the park works to clear snow and restore services. The park expects to be closed through at least March 12, "possibly longer." Source: *SF Gate* ([2/25](#), [3/3](#))

Yosemite National Park

Rockfall

On February 20, a large rockfall on El Capitan near Horsetail Fall occurred, requiring Northside drive from Camp 4 to El Capitan Crossover to be closed. There no injuries from the incident. Source: [yahoo!news](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - On March 3, the park announced that repairs to a section of the parkway near Dawnwood Road is taking longer than expected, necessitating a

continuation of the road closure until mid-summer. Heavy rains in May 2020 triggered a landslide that took out a 150-foot section of the parkway and damaging the culvert system. A 15-mile section from U.S. 460 in Clearbrook to the top of Bent Mountain has been closed since the incident. Source: [The Roanoke Times](#)

- *Cuyahoga Valley National Park* - On March 3, the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad once again suspended train operations. In October 2022, engineers had found instability at a site four miles south of the Fitzwater Maintenance Yard and suspended operations for further testing and analysis. After doing so, they planned to reopen on March 3. However, ongoing geotechnical soil monitoring identified increasing erosion. The park plans to stabilize the tracks so it may reopen, though there is no estimated date for resuming operations. Source: [Cuyahoga Valley National Park](#)
- *Mojave National Preserve* - On February 27, a contractor, Las Vegas Paving Corp., began repairs on two sections of Kelbaker Road that were damaged in 2022 storms. The road is closed through at least March 10, which it is planned to reopen, depending on construction progress and weather conditions. On March 20, the park intends to begin a major construction project on Cima Road, and the road will then be closed for about a year. Source: [Mojave National Preserve](#)
- *Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* - P-22, the famous mountain lion that was euthanized after sustaining life-threatening injuries and attacking a dog, was buried in an undisclosed location in the Santa Monica Mountains in a ceremony led by several Tribal groups. Source: [National Public Radio](#)
- *Virgin Islands National Park* - On March 3, the U.S. Attorney's office filed a new motion to dismiss the quiet title claim to Caneel Bay Resort by EHI Acquisitions, arguing that the company has failed to prove it has ownership of the land. EHI Acquisitions filed a claim on June 30, arguing they own all rights, title, and interests to the property. The land was deeded to the NPS in 1983, with a retention of the right to operate the resort through September 2023 under a Retained Use agreement. Source: [Virgin Islands Daily News](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - A 59-year-old has pleaded guilty to domestic violence for an incident that occurred at Happy Isles in August 2022 (see [8/24/22 Coalition Report](#)). The individual will be sentenced June 26. Source: [The Fresno Bee](#)

Acknowledgments

This newsletter is supported through Coalition staff and invaluable volunteers:

- Editor: Katie Wallace
- Tech and Production Support: Theresa Manthripragada, Steve Pittleman, Emily Thompson

- Regular Correspondent: Don Hellmann, Chris Soller
- Issue contributors: Dwayne Collier, Larry Frederick, Cherry Payne

If you see something that might be of interest to Coalition members, send it to report@protectnps.org.

* * * * *

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."

To receive a copy of this free publication, [join or support the Coalition](#). Any current, retired, or former-salaried (GS, Wage System, Seasonal, Temporary, or SES) National Park Service employee or volunteer who served under a signed volunteer agreement can join the Coalition. Coalition supporters who do not qualify under those criteria [may also join](#) and receive the newsletter.

--- ### ---

Copyright © 2023 Coalition To Protect America's National Parks, All rights reserved.