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The Coalition Report

Wednesday, May 10, 2023

Coalition Actions

The Coalition joined with numerous organizations in a [letter](#) to the House Committee on Natural Resources Chair Bruce Westerman (R-AR) and Ranking Member Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ), opposing seven bills scheduled for Committee markup. The letter asserts the pending legislation would weaken the Endangered Species Act. The legislation opposed is as follows:

1. H.J. Res 29, Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service relating to "Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Lesser Prairie-Chicken; Threatened Status With Section 4(d) Rule for the Northern Distinct Population Segment and Endangered Status for the Southern Distinct Population Segment"
2. H.J. Res. 46, Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the National Marine Fisheries Service relating to "Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Regulations for Listing Endangered and Threatened Species and Designating Critical Habitat"
3. H.J. Res. 49, Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service relating to "Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Endangered Species Status for Northern Long-Eared Bat"
4. H.R. 215, the Working to Advance Tangible and Effective Reforms (WATER) for California Act
5. H.R. 764, the Trust the Science Act
6. H.R. 1245, the Grizzly Bear State Management Act

7. H.R. 1419, the Comprehensive Grizzly Bear Management Act

The Coalition joined in a [protest](#) of all 116 parcels of the Bureau of Land Management Wyoming Office 2023 oil and gas lease sale.

Two Coalition Members, Rob Arnberger and Steve Martin, both former superintendents at Grand Canyon National Park, wrote an official [letter of support](#) to the White House, Department of the Interior, and Council on Environmental Quality, giving their support for the establishment of a Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni Grand Canyon National Monument through the Antiquities Act.

The Coalition continued its meetings with Congressional appropriators and met with the office of Rep. Jake Ellzey (R-TX).

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.

- *Clean energy at national parks* - The National Renewable Energy Laboratory published [an interview](#) with Alicen Kandt, the head of the Applied Engineering Group at NREL, about efforts partnering with the NPS on energy efficiency projects. Source: National Renewable Energy Laboratory
- *\$9.7 million for HBCUs* - On May 5, the NPS announced the award of \$9.7 million for 14 projects in 10 states through the Historic Preservation Fund's Historically Black Colleges and Universities grant program. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *More cashless parks* - Two more national park units have announced they will be going cashless (see previous *Coalition Reports* for other units soon to transition):
 - *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - Starting on May 26, the park will be going cashless for entrance fees and passes. Source: [Honolulu Star-Advertiser](#)
 - *Rocky Mountain National Park* - Starting on June 1, the park will be going cashless for entrance and permit fees. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Interview with Director Sams* - On April 26, *WGBH*, a Boston radio station, interviewed NPS Director Chuck Sams about his National Parks Week visit to Boston-area parks (also see "Around the Parks" below). Topics included co-stewardship of parks with Indigenous people, climate change mitigation, the new Green Parks Plan, and the NPS' Twitter account. Source: [WGBH](#)
- *Waterfall stamps* - On June 13, the U.S. Postal Service will release a new set of stamps featuring waterfalls across the U.S. Several national park units will be featured, including Deer Creek Falls at Grand Canyon National Park, Nevada Falls at Yosemite National Park, Waimoku Falls at Haleakalā National Park, Upper Falls

on the Blue Ridge Parkway, Dark Hollow Falls at Shenandoah National Park, Sunbeam Falls at Mount Rainier National Park, and Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River at Yellowstone National Park. Source: [Los Angeles Times](#)

- *Op-ed on improving civil service* - *Government Executive* published [an op-ed](#) by James-Christian Blockwood, executive vice president of the Partnership for Public Service, about reforms that would make federal employees more accountable and government more efficient. The op-ed includes discussion of how to address poor performance, reward strong performance, update leadership competencies, and improve federal hiring practices. Source: *Government Executive*
- *Op-ed on aerial fire retardant* - On April 28, *The San Diego Union-Tribune* Editorial Board published [an op-ed](#) arguing against a ban on aerial fire retardants, which is the subject of a current federal lawsuit by the Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics due to the effects on waterways. The op-ed argues that the lawsuit is short-sighted because the amount of pollution and other effects created by wildfires outweigh the effects on water pollution created by retardants. Source: *The San Diego Union-Tribune*

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail* - The Hawai'i Pacific Parks Association is now officially partnering with the trail as a philanthropic support group. HPPA already supports Pu'ukoholā Heiau National Historic Site, Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park, Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau National Historical Park, and Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. Source: [Big Island Video News](#)
- *Andrew Johnson National Historic Site* - The park has opened a new exhibit at the park visitor center in Greenville, Tennessee, about the Navajo War from 1862-1868 and President Johnson's negotiation of the Treaty of 1868, which allowed Navajo people to return to some of their traditional lands in the Four Corners region of the U.S. On April 20, members of the Navajo Nation performed a blessing at the NPS site. Source: [Andrew Johnson National Historic Site](#)
- *Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, Grand Portage National Monument, Isle Royale National Park, Keweenaw National Historical Park, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore* - The Midland Daily News published [an article](#) about the efforts of the non-profit park partner, National Parks of Lake Superior, to install solar, purchase electric cars, and implement other energy efficiency solutions at their five partner parks. The foundation hopes that the effort will also inspire other parks and park visitors to implement similar measures. Willdan Energy Solutions, an engineering services company, and Energy + Environmental Economics (E3), an energy consulting firm, are partners in the project. The project is expected to cost \$15-17 million and cut carbon emissions by 93% over 25 years. Source: *Midland Daily News*

- *Arches National Park* - A new study by Utah State University shows that the vast majority of visitors had a positive experience with the park's 2022 pilot timed entry program. Source: [National Parks Conservation Association](#)
- *Biscayne National Park* - The park has begun repairs on several structures in the Boca Chita Key Historic District. The park is partnering on the project with the Historic Preservation Training Center. The restoration of masonry work on the Pavilion will be completed this month and other buildings will be restored over the next several years. Source: [Biscayne National Park](#)
- *Blackwell School National Historic Site* - On April 22, the Blackwell School Alliance threw a block party to celebrate the site's transition to management by the National Park Service. The NPS has received \$265,000 in Fiscal Year 2024 funding for the site, including funds to hire the first site manager. [An article](#) by *The Big Bend Sentinel* discussed the next steps in park management, including the creation of a foundation document and ongoing discussions about park and resource management, as well as visitor amenities. Source: *The Big Bend Sentinel*
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - The parkway has begun repair work on the Price Lake Dam bridge at Milepost 296. Lake levels will be dropped and some temporary road and lane closures will be necessary. The lake, campground, and boar rentals are expected to remain open. The bridge was damaged by Tropical Storm Fred in 2021. The project is expected to be complete in late June. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - The parkway will soon begin the first phase of repairs in the Mabry Mill area, Milepost 176.2. The first phase will repair the mill wheel, which will be completed this summer. Future repairs will include pond dredging, replacement of the millhouse room, and more permanent repairs to the wheel. The repairs follow a plan outlined in an assessment by the Historic Preservation Training Center. Concession services and interpretive programming at the mill will continue through the repairs. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)
- *Boston African American National Historic Site, Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, Boston National Historical Park*, - On April 25 and 26, NPS Director Chuck Sams visited several national park units in the Boston area to celebrate National Park Week, including participating in a panel on Indigenous knowledge, discussing the updated Green Parks Plan, welcoming new Americans in a naturalization ceremony, and highlighting efforts to better tell diverse American stories. Source: [Boston National Historical Park](#)
- *Bryce Canyon National Park, Great Basin National Park* - *The Harvard Gazette* published [an article](#) about three students who have worked or interned in national parks and national forests and their personal connections to the natural world. Source: *The Harvard Gazette*

- *Cape Cod National Seashore* - The NPS has issued a Request for Proposals to lease eight historic "dune shacks" located in the Peaked Hill Bars National Register of Historic District in Provincetown and Truro. Contracts will last for 10 years. Proposals are due July 3. Source: [Cape Cod National Seashore](#)
- *Cuyahoga Valley National Park* - The *Akron Beacon Journal* published [an article](#) celebrating the biodiversity of the park. Source: *Akron Beacon Journal*
- *Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area* - The NPS has written official letters to Upper Mount Bethel Township (PA) supervisors expressing concern that a proposed development called River Pointe Commerce Park would negatively impact storm runoff and visitors' experience on the Delaware River. Supervisors and the NPS will meet in the near future to discuss the project. Source: [The Morning Call](#)
- *Denali National Park and Preserve* - The U.S. Army published [an article](#) about the annual efforts of the "Sugar Bears," also known as Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment, to deliver supplies via Chinook helicopter to the Denali basecamp on Kahiltna Glacier. The efforts support the park while giving the Army staff opportunities to fly at high elevation. Source: U.S. Army
- *Dry Tortugas National Park* - On May 1, the park announced that an underwater survey has discovered the archaeological remains of a 19th century yellow fever quarantine hospital and cemetery on a submerged island near Garden Key. The survey was conducted in August 2022 by park staff, the NPS' Submerged Resources Center, the Southeast Archeological Center, and a University of Miami graduate student. The site will be monitored by members of the South Florida National Parks Cultural Resources Program. Source: [Dry Tortugas National Park](#)
- *Everglades National Park* - The park will be repaving the Shark Valley entrance road, parking lot, and tram road from May 6 through May 23. The Federal Highway Administration is managing the project through a contractor. The area will remain closed through the construction period. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Gateway Arch National Park* - The Gateway Arch Park Foundation has received a \$2.7 million grant from the Missouri Department of Economic Development's Local Tourism Asset Development Grant Program for the Old Courthouse renovation project. Source: [Gateway Arch National Park](#)
- *Gateway National Recreation Area* - On April 27, the Fort Hancock 21st Century Federal Advisory Committee made a recommendation that the park continue its Sandy Hook leasing program, in which over 30 historic properties are leased to commercial entities. Source: [The Monmouth Journal](#)

- *George Washington Memorial Parkway* - On May 15, the parkway will begin a project to replace Bridges 23 and 24 on the Mount Vernon Trail south of Alexandria within Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve and near Belle Haven Park. The trail will remain open with detours. The new bridges will be four feet wider and will have pedestrian safe handrails. The project will also include the rehabilitation of a bench and overlook on Bridge 23. The project is expected to be complete in April 2024. Source: [George Washington Memorial Parkway](#)
- *Gettysburg National Military Park* - WESA published [an article](#) about Gettysburg's new historic leasing program in which visitors may be able to stay in historic buildings at the park. Park spokesperson Jason Martz is interviewed in the article. Source: WESA
- *Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve* - On April 24, the park released results from its Environmental Monitoring and Compliance Program, which was initiated in 2022 to monitor cruise ship operations in the park. 29 inspections were carried out on 13 different ships. Source: [Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - *The San Francisco Standard* published [an article](#) about the efforts of Amy Meyer to help establish Golden Gate as a national park unit. Source: *The San Francisco Standard*
- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - *The Stanford Social Innovation Review* published an excerpt from the book *Don't Lead Alone*, focusing on a case study on the creation and management of the Presidio through the Presidio Trust to demonstrate principles of leadership and coalition building. Source: [Stanford Social Innovation Review](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - On May 4, the park and the Havasupai Tribe hosted a ceremony at Bright Angel trailhead to rename Indian Garden to Havasupai Gardens. The name change was officially requested by the Tribe and approved by the park earlier this year. Source: [KNAU](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park, Zion National Park* - *The Los Angeles Times* published [an article](#) about the outbreak of avian influenza among the endangered California condor population that lives in Utah and Arizona. 21 of the 116 individuals has died since early March. The article outlines the challenges to managing an outbreak, including feeding, quarantines, and vaccination. Source: *Los Angeles Times*
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - On April 28, Greenbrier Road, Porters Creek Trail, Brushy Mountain Trail, and Campsites 31, 32, and 33 were reopened to the public after being rehabilitated from a July 2022 flood event. Old Settlers Trail and Grapeyard Ridge Trail reopened earlier in April. Ramsey Cascades Road and Ramsey Cascades Trail remain closed while trail crews reroute the trail and rebuild log footbridges. Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)

- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park - Knox News* published [a profile](#) of Dana Soehn, former park spokesperson and new CEO/president of Friends of the Smokies. Source: *Knox News*
- *Haleakalā National Park, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park - Hawai'i Public Radio* published [interviews](#) by the Center for Oral History at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa with long-time (over 60 years!) Haleakalā volunteer Rose Freitas Cambra, former Haleakalā staff Walter Pu, and current Hawai'i Volcanoes superintendent Dr. Rhonda Loh. Source: *Hawai'i Public Radio*
- *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - The NPS has announced confirmation of a small wild population of the endangered Ka'ū silversword in a closed part of the park on Mauna Loa, Kilohana. A new [storymap](#) by the park details their recovery, including reintroduction efforts. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)
- *Independence National Historical Park* - The park has announced that Carpenters' Hall will reopen on July 3 after being closed since April 2022 due to both a preservation project and a fire in the building's basement. Additionally, a temporary exhibit called "Artifacts and Architecture" will feature objects found in the preservation and images from the project. The restoration cost \$3 million and was partially funded by the State of Pennsylvania and members of the Carpenters' Company. Source: [Philly Voice](#)
- *Indiana Dunes National Park* - The park has awarded two Commercial Use Authorizations for food concessions. Smoke on the Water was chosen to operate the Portage Lakefront and Riverwalk concession stand. The Big Weiner was chosen to operate the West Beach concession stand. Source: [Indiana Dunes National Park](#)
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - On May 5, Katherine Landing Fuel Dock reopened to the public. It had been closed since January 19 for a modernization project. The fuel system has now been updated and there are 47 new transient moorage slips for visitors. Source: [Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - On May 4, the television show "20/20" aired an episode about the individual's body that was found in a barrel after lake levels receded in May 2022. Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department is continuing to investigate the homicide and is interviewed in the episode. DNA testing may take a year or more due to backlogs. Source: [ABC News](#)
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - The park published [a summary](#) of the comments they received in the recent public scoping process for a Sustainable Low Water Access Plan and Environmental Assessment. Source: [KSNV](#)
- *Longfellow House Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site* - On May 4,

the park announced the acceptance of a donation of the Winslow Homer watercolor painting from 1882, *Waiting for the Boats*. The item was donated by Frances Appleton Wetherell, great-granddaughter of Henry and Frances Longfellow. The painting will go on regular display when the site opens for the season on May 26. A livestream lecture by Sylvia Yount, the Lawrence A. Fleischman Curator in Charge of the American Wing of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, will also commemorate the occasion on June 6. Source: [Longfellow House Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site](#)

- *Natchez National Historical Park* - On May 3, the park met with the African American Civil War Museum to discuss plans to create a virtual U.S. Colored Troops trail, which would consist of a series of markers at NPS sites across the country. Source: [Magnolia State Live](#)
- *National Capital Region* - A new report by George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health has found that NPS park management outside of the National Mall has created large inequities in amenities, maintenance, and park access in Washington, DC. The report pointed out the challenges that federal bureaucracy bring to basic park amenities that would be standard and easily fixed by municipal governance. Source: [George Washington University Public Health](#)
- *National Capital Region* - The DC Public Library published [a new collection](#) to its online platform, *DigDC*, of photographs from the 1940s to 1960s taken in the national park units of the National Capital Region. Source: *DigDC*
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - On April 27, the Commission of Fine Arts approved the site for a new Fallen Journalists Memorial on the National Mall between the National Museum of the American Indian and Voice of America. The project is being spearheaded by the Fallen Journalists Memorial Foundation and will be funded entirely by private donations. The memorial is expected to be complete by the end of 2028. Source: [WUSA9](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - *NBC Washington* published [an article](#) about lighting at national park units in Washington, DC. They found that the NPS has struggled to adequately repair lighting in many parks because their filled electrician positions have gone from ten, pre-pandemic, to only two due to higher post-pandemic electrician wages in the private sector. They have also struggled to keep a consistent contractor for the work. Source: [NBC Washington](#)
- *National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program* (NPS-administered program) - The NPS has announced that it is partnering with the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program to interview living descendants of Underground Railroad participants. The program will create video and audio recordings which will be stored by the NPS and the University of Florida Digital Collections at George A. Smathers Libraries. Source: [National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom](#)

[Program](#)

- *National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program* - On April 25, nine new listings from six states were added to the program. Source: [National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program](#)
- *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* (NPS-administered program) - *The Guardian* published [an article](#) about the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collections of Native American artifacts, particularly those with an unclear ownership history, such as many of the objects on loan from or donated by art collectors Charles and Valerie Diker. The article cites the regulations of NAGPRA and some of the grey areas of the law around ownership of objects. Source: *The Guardian*
- *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* (NPS-administered program) - *Cardinal News* published [an article](#) about the efforts of Stephanie Gardner, special collections librarian at Bridgewater College's Forrer Learning Commons, to return funerary belongings and remains under the tenets of NAGPRA over the last 12 years. Source: *Cardinal News*
- *Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park* - *E&E News* published [an article](#) about the efforts to establish Ocmulgee as a national park and preserve, the delays in making it happen, and the significance to the Tribes and the State of Georgia. Source: *E&E News*
- *Pearl Harbor National Memorial* - On April 21, Ken Potts passed away at the age of 102. Ken was the oldest known survivor of Japan's attack on the *USS Arizona* battleship at Pearl Harbor. There is only one other surviving member from the attack, and that individual is 101 years old. Source: [The New York Times](#)
- *Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore* - On May 8, the park began a project to repair the trail and stairs at Miners Beach, which were damaged during a storm in Fall 2022. The eastern parking area of Miners Beach will be closed and the North Country National Scenic Trail will be rerouted around the construction zone. The beach will remain open with access via a staircase near Miners River. Source: [Pictured Rocks National Seashore](#)
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - Harvard Law School's Animal Law and Policy Clinic has filed an appeal to the February 2023 federal court dismissal of their (and several other plaintiffs') lawsuit against the NPS for negligence in its management of tule elk in the park. Initial briefs in the Ninth Circuit District of Appeals will be filed by summer. Source: [Marin Independent Journal](#)
- *Saguaro National Park* - In mid-April, 35 scientists from the U.S. and Mexico met at the University of Arizona for a two-day symposium and workshop called, "The

Future of the Saguaro." Park biologist Don Swann presented at the conference.

Source: [This is Tucson](#)

- *Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* - On April 23, park staff captured the first black bear known to take up residence in the Santa Monica Mountains. It was caught in "a natural area" south of the Highway 101 freeway, on the western end of the mountain range. The individual is a 210-pound male and thought to be three or four years old. The individual was measured, given a physical exam, and outfitted with a GPS radio collar around its neck. The individual was dubbed "BB-12" and is suspected to be a bear that was observed by people and wildlife cameras in 2021 in the Newbury Park area. Source: [ABC7](#)
- *Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* - *The New York Times* published [an article](#) about the enduring legacy and fame of deceased mountain lion, P-22, and why he means so much to local residents. Source: *The New York Times*
- *Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail* - On April 27, the trail announced an official partnership via cooperative agreement with the Sultana Educational Foundation to provide educational programming with students from Maryland's Eastern Shore, including classroom curriculum materials, teacher professional development opportunities, and paddling programs. Programming will start in the 2023-2024 school year. Source: [Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail](#)
- *Statue of Liberty National Monument* - The NPS has awarded a \$17.7 million contract to Pullman SST, Inc., to rehabilitate the Ellis Island Main Immigration Building. The project will focus on exterior building components, including the masonry façade and clerestory windows. The funding comes from the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [Statue of Liberty National Monument](#)
- *Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve* - The park recently partnered with the Trust for Public Land and the City of Jacksonville to acquire over 100 acres on Black Hammock Island. Another 241 acres nearby was also conveyed to Pumpkin Hill Creek Preserve State Park to link existing parks in the interagency 7 Creeks Recreation Area. Source: [Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve](#)
- *Ulysses S Grant National Historic Site* - The Organization of American Historians has awarded the park with its 2023 Stanton-Horton Award for Excellence in National Park Service History for exhibits and events related to the 200th anniversary of President Grant's birth. Source: [Call Newspapers](#)
- *Virgin Islands National Park* - The Virgin Islands Delegate to Congress, Stacey Plaskett, introduced House Resolution 3025, which prohibits net increases of federal land on the island. Under the resolution, if more land is acquired in the future, others must be sold, exchanged, or donated. The resolution will next go to the House Committee on Natural Resources. Source: [Virgin Islands Daily News](#)

- *Virgin Islands National Park* - The park has opened up a Prospectus All for a 10-year contract to provide snorkel rental and instruction at Trunk Bay. Business proposals are due by August 23. Source: [Virgin Islands National Park](#)
- *White Sands National Park* - Last week, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland visited the park and highlighted the Department's efforts to make parks and other public lands available to all. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - Four conservation groups have filed an official objection to a plan to clearcut 5,500 acres of pine forest and establish over 50 miles of roads on the Custer Gallatin National Forest, adjacent to Yellowstone National Park. They argue that the effects on wildlife in the greater Yellowstone ecosystem and climate change impacts are substantial and that the plan was not transparent about its encroachment into old growth forests during environmental review. The groups involved are the Center for Biological Diversity, Sierra Club, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, and WildEarth Guardians. Source: [Center for Biological Diversity](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - *Sierra* published [an article](#) about many different perspectives about the challenges of difficulty of balancing high visitation and its subsequent infrastructure needs with the protection of park resources. Source: *Sierra*
- *Yosemite National Park* - The *Los Angeles Times* published an article about prehistoric burning practices and modern fire suppression. A new study by the University of California, Irvine, found that California parcels of land where Indigenous people are more likely to live are also locations where the most acreage burns. Yosemite is cited specifically as a location that was regularly burned by Indigenous people prior to contact with outsiders The article traces the history of Southern Sierra Miwuk people, who have been unable to do traditional fire management due to their lack of federal Tribal status. Source: [Los Angeles Times](#)

Personnel Changes

- *Fire Island National Seashore* - Scott McCormick was selected as the new deputy superintendent. Scott has 21 years of federal service, including work at the U.S. Forest Service as a law enforcement officer and program manager. Most recently, he worked as deputy regional director with the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Protective Service, Region Two. Scott begins his new role on June 19. Source: [Fire Island National Seashore](#)
- *Nicodemus National Historic Site* - Cassie Branstetter was selected as the new superintendent. Cassie has 13 years of NPS experience, most recently as the head of the interpretation division at Buffalo National River. She will begin her new role in July. Source: [Nicodemus National Historic Site](#)

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

- Clarence Shirley Blake, 87, passed away on April 20. Shirley worked for the NPS for over 33 years. Source: [The Register-Herald](#)
- Warren L. Rigby, 84, passed away on April 20. Warren worked for the NPS "at parks across the United States." Source: [The Spectrum](#)

Retired

- Tim Sims will retire this month after 34 years working at Booker T Washington National Monument. He retires as the chief of interpretation and resource management. Source: [Martinsville Bulletin](#)

In the News

- *Nature* published a "Working Scientist" [podcast interview](#) with Evi Emmenegger, a U.S. Geological Survey scientist, about efforts to separate politics from science at federal agencies, particularly through whistleblowing. In the podcast, Evi references Maria Caffrey, a former NPS scientist who spoke out about attempts to suppress her climate change research and within a year no longer worked at the NPS. Source: *Nature*
- *Psyche* published [an essay](#) by Jordan Fisher Smith called "How to Wander" that offers advice for building serendipity and exploration into one's travel plans, drawing on personal experience as a ranger. Jordan worked for a time as an NPS ranger and also wrote the book, *Nature Noir: A Park Ranger's Patrol in the Sierra*.
- *Hungry Horse News* published [a tribute](#) to the recently deceased Bill Haraden, former superintendent of Glacier National Park. The tribute was written by Bill Dakin, who worked for Bill Haraden at Glacier in the 1980s. Source: *Hungry Horse News*

Open for Comment

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

- *Acadia National Park* - Public comment is [open until May 23](#) on a proposal to restore wetlands and a brook at Great Meadow. Source: [Spectrum News](#)
- *Amache National Historic Site* - Public comment is [open until June 23](#) on a foundation document to guide the new national park unit. Source: [Amache National](#)

[Historic Site](#)

- *Apostle Islands National Lakeshore* - Public comment is [open until May 12](#) on a plan to create an accessible ramp at Meyers Beach and a new trail network at Little Sand Bay. Source: [Apostle Islands National Lakeshore](#)
- *Congaree National Park* - Public comment is [open until May 21](#) on four possible solutions to the increase in violations of park dog rules on the Boardwalk Loop Trail. Source: [Congaree National Park](#)
- *Great Basin National Park* - Public comment is [open until May 30](#) on a plan to open two new cave tours in Lehman Caves - a 30-minute tour for those with time or mobility limitations and an off-trail experience. Source: [Great Basin National Park](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - Public comment is [open until June 2](#) on a Laurel Falls Trail Management Plan. Source: [WATE](#)
- *Ice Age National Scenic Trail* - Public comment is [open until May 10](#) on an environmental assessment and planning process for the trail segment through Rocky County, Wisconsin. Source: [Fox 47](#)
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open until June 1](#) on a plan to improve the Cottonwood Cove road to Lake Mohave. Source: [Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)
- *Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument* - Public comment is [open until June 30](#) on a draft Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment that will guide park operations and planning. Source: [Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument](#)
- *Mount Rainier National Park* - Public comment is [open until June 11](#) on a plan to implement a timed entry system during the summer months for three of the park's entrances. Source: [Mount Rainier National Park](#)
- *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - Public comment is [open until June 9](#) on a general management plan/development concept plan for the park. Source: [Valles Caldera National Preserve](#)
- *Virgin Islands National Park* - Public comment has been [extended until June 9](#) on a Notice of Realty Action for a land exchange of property on the island of St. John with the Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands to construct a public K-12 school. The park has already issued a Finding of No Significant Impact for the land exchange, and this public comment period refers to the realty action. Source: [The Virgin Islands Daily News](#)

Other Department of the Interior News

- *\$146 million for wetland conservation* - On April 27, the Department of the Interior announced \$146 million in funding approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission to conserve or restore over 240,000 acres of wetland and other associated habitat for waterfowl across North America. \$50.9 million comes from North American Wetlands Conservation Act grants that are matched by \$73.4 million in partner funds. Another \$21.7 million comes from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$12.6 million for desalination research facility* - On May 3, the Department of the Interior announced \$12.6 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding to support the Bureau of Reclamation's Brackish Groundwater National Desalination Research Facility in Alamogordo, New Mexico. The funding will be used to construct an advanced water treatment facility and associated infrastructure at the facility to mitigate PFAS (Per- and poly-fluorinated alkyl substances) contamination. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

Congressional Actions

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

Senate Actions

May 2 – The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources concluded a hearing to examine the President's proposed budget request for Fiscal Year 2024 for the Department of the Interior, after receiving testimony from Deb Haaland, Secretary of the Interior.

May 3 – The Committee on the Judiciary was discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 152, designating April 2023 as "National Native Plant Month," and the resolution was then agreed to.

May 4 – The Senate agreed to S. Res. 198, designating the week of April 23 through April 29, 2023, as "National Water Week."

House Actions

April 27 – The Committee on Natural Resources began a markup, but did not complete action, on several bills, including the following:

- H.R. 764, to require the Secretary of the Interior to reissue regulations removing the gray wolf from the list of endangered and threatened wildlife under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

- H.R. 1245, to direct the Secretary of the Interior to reissue a final rule relating to removing the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem population of grizzly bears from the federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife.
- H.R. 1319, to require the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to develop long-distance bike trails on federal land.
- H.R. 1419, to direct the Secretary of the Interior to issue a new rule removing the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem population of grizzly bears from the federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife.
- H.R. 1567, to require that the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior submit accurate reports regarding hazardous fuels reduction activities.

April 28 – Read a letter from the Speaker wherein he designated the period from Saturday, April 29, 2023, through Monday, May 8, 2023, as a "district work period" under section 3(z) of House Resolution 5.

April 28 – The Committee on Natural Resources concluded a markup that began on April 27 on several bills as noted above. H.R. 1567 was ordered reported, as amended. H.R. 764, H.R. 1245, H.R. 1319, and H.R. 1419 were ordered reported, without amendment.

Incidents

Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.

Acadia National Park

Wildfire

On April 23, a wildfire began along the St. Sauveur hiking trail. Fire departments from Southwest Harbor, Bar Harbor, Lamoine, Mount Desert, Tremont, and Trenton responded, and the Maine State Forest Service coordinated water drops from its helicopter. The fire was contained to a half-acre and was suppressed in three hours. The park did not comment on the cause, but it did remind visitors that "contained charcoal and wood fires are allowed only in campgrounds and designated picnic areas within park-provided receptacles or in private grills, and they should be monitored closely at all times." Source:

[Acadia National Park](#)

Big Cypress National Preserve

Wildfire

On May 1, a wildfire was discovered just west of the Blue Loop portion of the Florida Trail. As of May 9, the Sandy Fire was estimated at 10,000 acres and 5% contained. Over 100 firefighters have been assigned to the fire. There are road and recreation closures in the area. Source: [Big Cypress National Preserve](#), [WGCU](#), [WUSF](#)

Blue Ridge Parkway

Cyclist fatality

On May 4, a 65-year-old was cycling with a group at the end of the rider line when the individual fell to the road shoulder near Milepost 430, north of Richland Balsam. Motorists administered CPR until medics arrived. The individual was pronounced dead at the scene by first responders. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)

Bryce Canyon National Park

Person filmed in shower

On April 25, an individual was toweling off in a shower stall after bathing when they noticed a phone camera pointed at them from underneath the curtain. The showering individual screamed and tried to grab the phone. The person with the camera, a 19-year-old, ran and was chased by the showering individual. The victim "put the individual in a hold," but the suspect was able to flee the facility. The victim's partner was able to catch the suspect and the individual was arrested. The suspect said they didn't film the victim, though law enforcement found videos of other individuals on the suspect's phone. The individual faces charges of voyeurism, assault, disorderly conduct and tampering with evidence. Source: [The Sacramento Bee](#)

Canyonlands National Park

Deceased person found

On April 24, a visitor reported an unoccupied vehicle in the Maze district. NPS staff began a search near the vehicle and located a deceased 48-year-old. Wayne County (UT) Sheriff's Office and a Department of Public Safety helicopter crew assisted with the recovery of the individual's body, which was transferred to the Utah Office of the Medical Examiner. The cause of death is currently unknown and an investigation is ongoing. Source: [Canyonlands National Park](#)

Cape Hatteras National Seashore

Naval debris

Starting on April 27, plastic, metal, paper, and textile fabric debris started washing up onshore along 25 miles of beach in the Outer Banks. It is suspected that the debris belongs to a U.S. Navy vessel located near the northeastern coast of North Carolina. The U.S. Navy is investigating the incident and clean-up is ongoing by staff from the NPS, Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Navy, and the Town of Nags Head. Source: [The Brunswick News](#), [Cape Hatteras National Seashore](#)

Cape Hatteras National Seashore

Teen dies in sand collapse

On May 6, a 17-year-old became trapped under several feet of sand when a dug-out hole collapsed on them, just east of off-road vehicle ramp 49 in Frisco "in a back-dune area behind the primary dune." Staff from the NPS, Dare County (NC) Emergency Medical Services, and Hatteras Island Ocean Rescue responded to the emergency call. Once on

scene, they began performing CPR and undigging the individual. The individual did not survive the incident. Source: [CBS 17](#)

Cape Lookout National Seashore **Artifact looted and recovered**

On April 16, some visitors found a prehistoric spearhead ("a Kirk Corner-Notched Point") on the beach and removed it from the park. The point is likely 8,000 to 10,000 years old. Rangers were able to track down the individuals and recover the object. It is unclear if the individuals will face charges for the theft. Source: [Charlotte Observer](#)

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area **Guilty plea to burglary**

In August and September 2022, a string of car burglaries was reported in the recreation area. In each case, a passenger car door was pried open with a special tool, debit and credit cards were stolen, and the cards would be used a local mall almost immediately to purchase luxury goods, such as Apple products and jewelry. While on patrol in September 2022, a ranger observed an individual crouched down between two vehicles and tampering with a vehicle. The individual had a 12-year-old serving as a look-out. When the ranger searched the individual's car, they found receipts for jewelry and Apple products, as well as "burglary tools." On December 12, 2022, the individual pleaded guilty to possession of burglary tools and attempted car burglary. On April 28, the individual was sentenced to a year in prison, a year of supervised release, and \$802 in restitution. Source: [WSB-TV](#)

Death Valley National Park **Worker bit by rabid bat**

On April 28, a bat was "behaving strangely" on a garbage can outside the Stovepipe Wells General Store. A concession worker wearing nitrile gloves attempted to move the bat and it bit the individual through the gloves. Park officials found the bat and had it tested for rabies, which came back positive on May 2. The worker was treated for rabies. Source: [Sacramento Bee](#)

Denali National Park and Preserve **Skier fatality**

On May 4, a visitor reported to the park's kennels that they had witnessed a skier trigger an avalanche on an unnamed slope south of Jenny Creek and East of Savage River. The skier was observed to be alone. NPS staff responded and found an unoccupied truck at the Mile 11 pullout. A ranger used a spotting scope to look for survivors in the area where the avalanche occurred. Two skis, one vertical, one lying flat on the surface, as well as an orange bag, were observed in a debris field in the avalanche area. Mountaineering rangers were brought to the scene via the park's contracted helicopter. After an aerial

reconnaissance, they set up a short-haul for two staff to land at the scene. The skier was found deceased and identified as a member of the Alaska Regional Communications Center (Denali Dispatch). Source: [Denali National Park and Preserve](#)

Denali National Park and Preserve

Missing climbers

At 5am on May 5, two individuals, ages 32 and 34, sent a message to a friend via satellite device, indicating they were going to climb the West Ridge route of the Moose's Tooth. On May 7, the friend called the park because they had not heard from the party since that initial message. An initial search found the party's tent unattended, with ski tracks leading to the base of the climb. They found the climbers' skis cached at the base where they had switched to crampons for the ascent. Their boot tracks continued up the West Ridge to the site of a recent, small slab avalanche. No other tracks were found. An aerial search on May 8 focused on the highly crevassed runout zone. As of May 9, two ice axes and a helmet were sighted from the air in the fall zone. Ground searches "will be limited due to crevasse danger and overhead hazards." Source: Denali National Park and Preserve ([5/8](#), [5/9](#))

Glacier National Park

Missing person found

On May 7, a 19-year-old individual was reported as missing. The individual was said to have begun a hike around midday on May 5. The vehicle of the individual was found at Huckleberry Trail. A search for the individual included support from the NPS, U.S. Border Patrol, Flathead County (MT) Sheriff's Office, local search dogs, North Valley Search and Rescue, Flathead Search and Rescue, and Two Bear Air. The trail was closed temporarily for the search. On May 8 around 11pm, Two Bear Air spotted the individual's thermal heat signature. They were able to lower a rescuer to the individual's location and found them alive and "somewhat responsive." The individual was extricated by hoist, then transferred to Evergreen Ambulance. The individual said they hiked to the saddle on the Huckleberry Trail, where there was a snowfield covering the trail. They slipped into a drainage on the east side of Huckleberry Mountain, fell into chest-deep snow, and lost their phone, water bottle, and shoes in the process. When the individual realized they could not make it back up to the trail, they began following the drainage downward. Source: [Glacier National Park, KTVH](#)

Golden Gate National Recreation Area, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park

Surfers rescued

On May 6, two surfers were swept out to sea past the Mile Rocks Lighthouse near Lands End, a mile offshore southwest of the Golden Gate Bridge. The NPS deployed a rescue swimmer and three additional rescue swimmers from San Francisco Fire Department were deployed to assist. The swimmers were able to make contact with the surfers and help

them onto a San Francisco Fire Department boat. They were transported to Hyde Street Pier and assessed and released by medics. Source: [SF Gate](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Missing backpacker

On April 26, a 69-year-old was reported missing by their family. The individual was last seen on April 22 near a backcountry campsite in the Deep Creek area. The individual had reserved a campsite there for 14 days and was said to be possibly experiencing a mental health crisis. By May 3, the search included 288 people from 51 agencies from four states. The search focused on the ground with people, dogs, and horses due to the rugged nature of the terrain. The NPS also used a drone in less-vegetated parts of the area. On May 3, the search began to be scaled back, and on May 6, the park announced it had suspended the active field search and changed the search to "limited, but continuous" mode. Source: *Citizen Times* ([5/1](#), [5/3](#)), Great Smoky Mountains National Park ([4/27](#), [5/6](#)) [*Editor note: Both the age of the individual and the last-seen date were reported differently in the sources. The age and date listed here are those reported by the NPS press release.*]

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Hiker rescue

On April 30, a hiker incurred a leg injury on the Middle Prong Trail. The hiker was brought out of the park and taken by LifeStar aeromedical transport to a hospital. Source: [WATE](#)

Guadalupe Mountains National Park

Climbing accident

On April 29, the NPS was alerted to a rock climbing accident on El Capitan Peak. It was reported that one member fell off an edge and appeared to be unresponsive, while another climber was stranded on a ledge. An interagency rescue team began a response that afternoon, working through the night to access the site. In the morning, the fallen climber was found deceased. The stranded climber was rescued. Additionally, one member of the rescue team sustained an injury and was transported to a medical facility in El Paso for care. Access to the Pine Springs area was temporarily restricted for emergency traffic and then reopened. The agencies involved in the rescue in addition to Guadalupe Mountains staff included Texas Department of Public Safety air support, C Company 2-227th MEDEVAC air crews, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, Eddy County (NM) Fire Department, Carlsbad Fire Department, Dell City Fire Department, firefighters from Olympic National Park, Culberson County (TX) Sheriff's Office, and the Culberson County Ambulance Service. Source: [Guadalupe Mountains National Park](#)

Joshua Tree National Park

Missing person

A 25-year-old was dropped off at Black Rock Campground on April 30 for a backpacking trip. On May 5, the individual was supposed to complete their trip and failed to arrive. They were reported overdue that day by the party that was supposed to pick them up. A missing person investigation and search and rescue are ongoing. The search includes NPS staff, the JOSAR team, Bureau of Land Management, a California Highway Patrol helicopter, and drones from the United States Marine Corps. The park is looking for any information the public might have. Source: [Joshua Tree National Park](#)

Lake Mead National Recreation Area

Lost hikers rescued

On April 30, a 54-year-old parent and 26-year-old child were hiking on the White Rock Trail when the older one became dehydrated and fell. The younger individual went toward the trailhead to get help and also became exhausted. They were able to contact emergency services to report their condition and were "in and out of consciousness." Staff from the NPS, Mohave County (NV) Sheriff's Office, Lake Mohave Ranchos Fire, and a Western Air Rescue DPS helicopter from Kingman responded to the incident. They were spotted from the trailhead and rescuers were able to call in both of their locations to the helicopter, which picked them up. They were taken to a command post and evaluated by Lake Mohave Ranchos Fire staff. Source: [KVVU](#)

Olympic National Park

Lodge burns down

On May 7, the Hurricane Ridge Day Lodge was destroyed by a fire. The lodge has been closed to the public since April 3 for a rehabilitation project. The lodge was fully engulfed in flames when a law enforcement ranger on patrol came across the scene. No one was in the structure and no injuries were reported. Clallam County (WA) Fire District 2 and Port Fire Department responded to the fire. By the time they arrived, the building had already collapsed to its foundation and has been described as a "complete loss." As of May 8, the building was still smoldering, but contained to its footprint. The park is hiring a third-party investigator to help determine the origin and cause of the fire. The Hurricane Ridge Road from the Heart of the Hills Campground remains closed to the public. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#), [KOMO News](#), Olympic National Park ([5/7](#), [5/8](#))

Rocky Mountain National Park

Missing person

On April 27, an individual had been reported as missing in Parker, Colorado, and then was located on April 29 in Denver and reunited with family. Then, on May 1, the same individual was reported missing in Rocky Mountain. The individual had last been seen the day before in the Sandbeach Lake parking area near the Wild Basin Entrance Station. The individual was with family at the entrance station before they "willingly walked away." An individual matching the description of the missing person was reported to have been seen by NPS staff on April 30 travelling on foot near Copeland Lake walking west on the Wild

Basin Road, and then again by a visitor the following day near the Wild Basin summer trailhead. Search efforts continued through May 3 by the park's Search and Rescue Team, as well as a dog team from Front Range Rescue Dogs. Search efforts were concentrated around the summer trailhead and up to Copeland Falls. As of May 5, active search efforts have been suspended and an investigation is ongoing. The park is asking the public for any information they can provide. Source: [Rocky Mountain National Park](#)

Wind Cave National Park

Escaped horse

On May 2, a horse escaped its tether at a backcountry campsite and was separated from its owner. Staff from the NPS, Custer State Park, Custer County (SD) Sheriff's Office, Custer County Search and Rescue, and South Dakota Wing of the Civil Air Patrol conducted a search for the animal, utilizing UTVs, hikers, horseback riders, and an infrared drone. On May 9, the horse was found walking along Highway 385 near the Wind Cave Canyon Trailhead. The horse was reunited with its owner. An evaluation by the Fall River Veterinary Clinic found the horse was dehydrated and had a "slightly scraped up leg," but is otherwise healthy. Source: Wind Cave National Park ([5/5](#), [5/9](#))

Yosemite National Park

Flooding

On April 28, the eastern end of Yosemite Valley closed due to predictions of high flooding due to snowmelt in the park over the following days. The park reopened the morning of May 1, two days earlier than expected, due to lower-than-predicted river levels. Source: [ABC 7](#)

Yosemite National Park

Road damage

The park has announced a 200-foot-long, four-foot-deep crack on the Big Oak Flat Road, requiring a closure between the Highway 120 park entrance and the Merced Grove. The road's surface is rapidly moving, as well as the embankment below the road and water is flowing through it. Officials have stated that it is not safe to drive, even for limited traffic. They will be working with the Federal Highway Administration to make repairs and it is expected to be closed until at least mid-June. Source: [ABC7](#)

Zion National Park

Water rescue

On April 28, visitors reported to emergency services that a 25-year-old individual was holding onto a log in the Virgin River and calling for help. NPS staff and Washington County (UT) Sheriff's Office were conducting a swift water rescue training exercise nearby and were dispatched to the scene. They were able to pull the individual from the river near Birch Creek. The individual was unresponsive with no pulse when pulled out of the water

and CPR was administered. A pulse was regained and the individual was flown by air to a local hospital. Source: [News 3 LV](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area* - The park was able to reopen Bullfrog North Boat Ramp to houseboats and larger vessels for the first time since November 2022 due to rising lake levels. Source: [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#)
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - On April 26, the Clark County (NV) Coroner's Office announced that three sets of human remains found at Swim Beach in Boulder Basin in July and August of 2022 are those of a 52-year-old who went missing in July 1998. The individual had been fishing in a boat just off Boulder Beach and their boat was found running circles on the lake, above a depth of 181 feet of water. The cause and manner of death have not yet been identified. Source: [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#)
- *Rock Creek Park* - An area of Fort Totten Park remains closed since an NPS employee found two metal canisters on-site (see [Coalition Report 4/26/23](#)). The U.S. Army was able to positively identify them as WWII-era munitions and their initial assessment determined that the munitions require further analysis to ensure safety in the area. "No Trespassing" signs have been installed and fencing and barriers will go up soon. The majority of the park remains open; the closed area is east of Fort Totten Drive, south of Gallatin Street/Metropolitan Branch Trail and north of Brookland Ave NE/Farragut St. Source: [Civil War Defenses of Washington](#)
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - Due to ongoing winter storm damage (see [Coalition Report](#) from [3/22/23](#) and [4/5/23](#)), the park has announced that the Cedar Grove area of the park is unlikely to open before the end of this year's summer season. Mineral King access is unlikely before mid-June. Source: [KMPH](#)

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

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