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**The Coalition Report**  
**Wednesday, November 15, 2023**

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The Coalition's annual giving campaign has begun. Our success is due to your support and generosity, for which we are so grateful.

We hope you will consider continuing your support.

**Donate**

**Coalition Actions**

The Coalition, along with Association of National Park Rangers and the National Parks Conservation Association, is conducting [a survey for current NPS employees](#) to gather input on issues impacting the National Park Service, in particular issues pertaining to employee morale, housing, and hiring. We welcome your input and encourage you to share with friends and colleagues within NPS.

The Coalition is now accepting nominations for the 2023 George Hartzog Award for individuals who demonstrate outstanding support for the mission of the National Park Service. Nominations are due November 30. [Learn more.](#)

Through the National Parks Second Century Action Coalition, the Coalition signed [a letter](#) to Congress opposing the current House of Representatives version of the Fiscal Year 2024 Interior Appropriations bill. The letter expresses opposition to the 13% cut to the NPS budget, as well as attached policy riders, including removing protections for grey

wolves, grizzly bears, clean air, and clean water.

The Coalition joined with 48 organizations in [a letter](#) to Congress expressing opposition to certain amendments to the Fiscal Year 2024 Interior Appropriations bill, many of which would have drastic effects on environmental processes and the Department of the Interior.

We issued [a press release](#) thanking the U.S. Forest Service for holding a public session on expanding the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument and expressing support for the expansion.

The Coalition submitted [comments](#) in support of Preferred Alternative C to the North Cascades National Park Service Complex proposed Grizzly Bear Restoration Management Plan. Alternative C would reintroduce a small number of grizzly bears over a five- to ten-year period. Additionally, the letter makes numerous technical recommendations to the proposal.

We joined with the National Parks Conservation Association and the Sierra Club in submitting detailed [comments](#) expressing concerns with Nebraska's proposed regional haze state implementation plan for the second period.

Coalition Executive Council Chair Mike Murray was quoted in a *National Parks Traveler* [article](#) about NPS Director Chuck Sams' decision permitting the Jemez Pueblo in New Mexico to kill a bald or golden eagle within Valles Caldera National Preserve for cultural purposes. Mike noted the decision was precedent-setting and expressed concern that the decision was made without providing for public comment or consultation with other affiliated Tribes.

The Coalition joined with the National Parks Conservation Association in submitting extensive [comments](#) to the Bureau of Land Management on its draft resource management plan and environmental impact statement for Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

Additionally, the Coalition joined with 11 organizations in a separate comment [letter](#) to the Bureau of Land Management BLM on its draft resource management plan and environmental impact statement for Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

### **National/Regional NPS Updates**

*A summary of news pertaining to management and oversight of the NPS, to current trends and issues affecting the National Park System and its programs, or intersecting with the parks on a more regional basis.*

- *NPS pledges 30% female law enforcement force by 2030* - On November 1, the NPS announced a seven-year initiative to hire more women into law enforcement positions across the country. This comes on the heels of the Department of the

Interior's Law Enforcement Task Force report, released the week prior (see [11/1/23 Coalition Report](#)). Currently, women represent only 16% of the NPS law enforcement workforce. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)

- *"Disastrous impacts of budget cuts"* - The National Parks Conservation Association published [an article](#) about the current Fiscal Year 2024 spending bill that passed the House of Representatives. It would cut \$433 million (12.5%) from the National Park Service budget. Source: National Parks Conservation Association
- *Unions urge protections from Schedule F* - Over a dozen federal labor organizations urged the Office of Personnel Management to finalize a series of proposed regulations that would create "guard rails" for federal agencies looking to redefine positions as "at-will" under what is known as "Schedule F" under the Merit Systems Protection Board. Former President Donald Trump established an executive order that created Schedule F; the executive order was rescinded under President Biden. Multiple Republican candidates for the presidency in 2024 have said they will potentially lay off thousands of federal employees under Schedule F. The OPM's [proposed regulations](#) would create clarity around the limits of presidential authority with relation to tenured competitive service employees. [Public comments on the proposal](#) are open through November 17. Source: [Government Executive](#), Federal Register
- *\$5 million from NPF for service corps* - On November 1, the National Park Foundation announced a \$5 million investment to expand service corps crews across the country. \$1 million of that investment will fund the Indian Youth Service Corps, a new program of the Department of the Interior. Source: [Sierra Sun Times](#)
- *\$4.4 million from NPF for youth programs* - On November 13, the National Park Foundation announced they are awarding \$4.4 million for 99 grants through their Open OutDoors for Kids program. Source: [PR Newswire](#)
- *President Carter honored for Alaska public lands* - On November 1, former President Jimmy Carter was honored by the Alaska Wilderness League with the Mardie Murie Lifetime Achievement Award for his role in creating and passing the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), which put over 100 million acres of federal territory into conservation units, including the expansion of Denali National Park and Preserve and creation of Kenai Fjords National Park. Source: [Alaska Beacon](#)

## **Around the Parks**

*Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.*

- *Arches National Park* - The park announced it will implement another pilot timed entry reservation system, starting April 1, 2024. A public comment period for long-term visitor access strategies is currently open (see "Open for Public Comment")

below). Source: [Arches National Park](#)

- *Big Bend National Park* - Park Ranger Cathy Buckingham was recently recognized by the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians for 20 consecutive years of National Emergency Medical Services Certification, a rare distinction. Cathy has worked at a number of national park units, and is currently at Big Bend. Source: [Big Bend National Park](#)
- *Big Cypress National Preserve* - On November 7, the National Parks Conservation Association released a new report called "Speaking Up for the Swamp" that examines the impacts of seismic testing activities conducted in 2017 and 2018 by the Burnett Oil Company. The report argues that the wetlands have not shown signs of recovery since and that the area has experienced decreases in biodiversity and water levels. Source: [National Parks Conservation Association](#)
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - *Cardinal News* published [an article](#) about the challenges to managing the Blue Ridge Parkway, particularly its financial shortfalls. It highlights an effort by the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation called "Blue Ridge Rising" that seeks to unite the gateway communities along the parkway to establish a more unified voice and economic development strategy. Source: *Cardinal News*
- *Buffalo National River* - On October 26, a group called the Remnants Project organized a discussion with Runway Group, LLC, about its recent community survey that asked about re-designating Buffalo to a national park and preserve. About 1,185 people attended the discussion in-person, with another ~1,900 on *Zoom* or *Facebook Live*. The Runway Group ultimately did not show for the meeting. Ten speakers talked about the re-designation proposal from different angles, many upset that the local community had not been consulted in the conversation. Source: [Arkansas Advocate](#)
- *Buffalo National River* - The NPS has issued a prospectus for proposals to provide canoe rentals and shuttle services. Twelve contracts are expected to be awarded, each offering a term of 10 years. Proposals are due on January 26, 2024. Source: [Buffalo National River](#)
- *Cape Cod National Seashore* - The park has awarded a contract to Classic Site Solutions, Inc., for construction of the Mill Creek Water Control Structure, which will support the larger Herring River Restoration Project by protecting low-lying properties with adjustable tide gates while still allowing fish to spawn upstream. Permitting, design, and engineering were supported by the NPS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration. \$8 million in funding for construction is being funded by the Natural Resources Conservation Service with \$1.425 million matched by the National Park Foundation. It is expected to be completed by Spring 2025. Source: [Cape Cod National Seashore](#)

- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - *CoastalReview.org* is publishing [a multi-part series](#) about Frank Stick, an individual who greatly influenced the modern history of the Outer Banks. Its [fourth chapter](#) focuses on Frank's efforts to establish Cape Hatteras as a national seashore. Source: *CoastalReview.org*
- *Cape Lookout National Seashore* - On November 7, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Wilmington District, in cooperation with the National Park Service, State of North Carolina, and Carteret County (NC), awarded a \$6.9 million contract to Next Generation Logistics to provide maintenance dredging of the Back Sound to Lookout Bight Federal Navigation Channel and adjacent Cape Lookout channels. Dredged materials suitable for beach placement will be placed on the interior beach adjacent to NPS structures, while remaining materials will be placed to provide habitat for nesting shore birds. Work is expected to begin in December. Source: [DredgingToday.com](#)
- *Channel Islands National Park* - On November 6, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that two plants that live only on the Channel Islands, Santa Cruz Island Dudleya and island bedstraw, have been declared fully recovered and no longer in need of Endangered Species Act protections. The removal of sheep grazing and non-native pigs from the islands have greatly changed the ability of these plants and others to thrive. Source: [Channel Islands National Park](#)
- *Chesapeake Gateways Grants* (an NPS-administered program) - In September, the NPS awarded \$2.4 million in Chesapeake Gateways Grants for 22 projects telling undertold stories and promoting resilient communities throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Source: [National Park Service: Chesapeake Bay Watershed](#)
- *Cumberland Island National Seashore* - The park recently finished repairs on the Dungeness and Sea Camp Docks, which were both damaged by Hurricanes Matthew and Irma in 2016 and 2017. Visitor access is now open. Source: [Cumberland Island National Seashore](#)
- *Curecanti National Recreation Area* - The park recently finished a project to improve the Elk Creek Marina boat ramp. The \$126,000 project was funded by park recreation fee revenue. Over the summer, the park was also able to rehabilitate 30 restrooms. Future improvements in the park include the rehabilitation of 30 more restrooms, replacement of all fish cleaning stations at Elk Creek and Lake Fork marinas, and the replacement of all underground water and wastewater infrastructure at Elk Creek and Lake Fork. Source: [Curecanti National Recreation Area](#)
- *Devils Tower National Monument* - The *Cowboy State Daily* published an article about efforts to change the name of Devils Tower, including the name's history and efforts by Wyoming Senate President Ogden Driskill to retain it. Source: [Cowboy](#)

[State Daily](#)

- *Federal Lands to Parks* (an NPS-administered program) - The Jacksonville, Florida, City Council has approved a 40-year lease of 82 acres to the Jacksonville Fair Association so it can relocate its operation to have more space and ability to support youth groups. The lease is subject to review by the Federal Lands to Parks program because it was donated to the city in 2002 by the U.S. Navy when it closed the Cecil Field military base. The NPS has stated it should have a decision about the lease "soon." Source: [Jacksonville.com](#)
- *First Ladies National Historic Site* - The National First Ladies Library has rebranded itself as the National First Ladies Library & Museum to reflect its role both as a research library and full museum. They also unveiled a new logo to go with their new name. The museum and library are located within the national historic site and are independently managed. Source: [The Repository](#)
- *Gateway National Recreation Area* - On November 9, the superintendent of the park announced that after completing the design process on the redevelopment of two of Fort Hancock's historic officer homes at the northern end of Sandy Hook, the developer's financial analysis of the project is \$50 million more than the developer is willing to invest and a full \$70 million more than the NPS originally estimated. The developer has not yet withdrawn its proposal and the park is looking into options to make up the \$50 million gap in funding. The redevelopment was to serve as a prototype for the 21 officers' buildings on site. Source: [Asbury Park Press](#)
- *Gateway National Recreation Area* - On October 31, lawyers and representatives for the Legal Aid Society and the Coalition for the Homeless took a tour of Floyd Bennett Field, an NPS property that is currently slated to accommodate migrant families under New York City's right-to-shelter mandate. The organizations have concerns about the safety of children, poor bathroom access, a lack of storage for families to put their belongings, transportation difficulties that will make it challenging to get children to school, and poor trash management solutions. Source: [New York Daily News](#)
- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - The *San Francisco Chronicle* published [an article](#) about the ongoing trademark issue with the "Cliff House," an NPS property and iconic San Francisco locale. The former lease owners are arguing that they own "incontestable rights" to the name, including four registered trademarks through the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. They would like to sell the trademarks to the new lease owner for an undisclosed, large sum of money, which is currently under negotiation. It is unclear if the name is considered historic or geographical in nature. The 2016 trademark battle between outgoing and incoming concessioners in Yosemite National Park was referenced in the article. Source: *San Francisco Chronicle*

- *Glacier National Park* - The park announced it will implement a pilot vehicle reservation system for the 2024 summer season. This year, vehicle reservations will be valid for one day only, allowing for a greater number of reservations to be available. Other adjustments to the system have also been made, based on feedback and data collected in 2023. Source: [Daily Montanan](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - On November 3, the park released a new podcast series focused on Indigenous perspectives of the canyon, called "Grand Canyon Speaks." The podcast is a follow up to in-person programming by the same name that took place during Summer 2023. There are seven episodes available for listening. The podcast and live programming were funded by the Grand Canyon Conservancy. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)
- *Grand Teton National Park* - The NPS has selected two companies to provide guided climbing and ski mountaineering in the park: Exum Mountain Guides and Jackson Hole Mountain Guides. Both contracts will last 10 years, starting on January 1, 2024. Both companies are currently concessioners in the park. Source: [Grand Teton National Park](#)
- *Grand Teton National Park* - A new documentary has been [published on Vimeo](#), "Animal Trails: Rediscovering Grand Teton Migrations." The film chronicles a decade of research about the long migration of the park's mule deer and pronghorn populations. The film was co-produced by the Wyoming Migration Initiative and the park, and is a companion to an exhibit that recently opened at the Craig Thomas Visitor Center, "Grand Migrations: Wildlife on the Move." The film debuted at the visitor center and the Colter Bay Museum over Summer 2023. Source: [University of Wyoming News](#)
- *Independence Hall National Historical Park* - The Benjamin Rush Garden has been closed to begin a project that will return the historic Bicentennial Bell to the public for the first time since 2013. The bell was given to the United States by Queen Elizabeth II to commemorate the U.S.' 200th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and was cast at the same foundry in London as the Liberty Bell. It was on display until being put into storage when the park's old visitor center was demolished in 2013. The garden is being outfitted to display the bell in time for the U.S.' 250th anniversary, and it will be renamed the Bicentennial Bell Garden. The project is being funded by the Independence Historical Trust through a \$1 million donation from The Landenberger Family Foundation. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - Starting on January 1, the park will move to a cashless fee collection system for entrance, lake use, and campground fees. Campground reservations, including those that are first-come, first-served, will also move to [Recreation.gov](#). Source: [Fox5Vegas](#)

- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - On November 3, the Bureau of Reclamation announced the execution of seven new conservation agreements in Arizona, which will conserve up to 162,710-acre feet of water in Lake Mead through 2026. The voluntary agreements come at an investment of \$63.4 million, funded by the Lower Colorado Basin System Conservation and Efficiency Program through the Inflation Reduction Act. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Land and Water Conservation Fund* (an NPS-administered program) - On November 9, the Vicksburg (MS) Board of Mayor and Aldermen announced that the NPS has approved the use of a 5.4-acre property at Oak and Lee Streets for a new Riverfront Park site to replace the previous park site that was damaged by landslides in 2020 (see [8/23/23 Coalition Report](#)). The original park had been created with LWCF funds, so NPS approval was required to close the old site. Source: [The Vicksburg Post](#)
- *Lower Mississippi Delta Initiative* (an NPS-administered program) - On November 9, the NPS, in partnership with the Jefferson National Parks Association, announced the award of \$186,781 in Lower Mississippi Delta Initiative grants for 11 projects across five states to preserve the region's culture and history. Source: [National Park Service: Lower Mississippi Delta Region](#)
- *Lyndon B Johnson National Historical Park* - On November 1, the park broke ground on the Texas White House Rehabilitation Project, which will address structural and mold issues, as well as other rehabilitation work needed to reopen the structure. The Texas White House has been closed to the public since 2018 due to these issues. The \$11.4 million project is being executed by KOMAN Sustainable Solutions, LLC, with funding from the Great American Outdoors Act. Rehabilitation of the historic hangar, which serves as the park's visitor center, is being paid for with NPS repair and rehabilitation and cyclic maintenance funds. The Texas White House Complex is expected to reopen to the public in late 2025. Source: [Lyndon B Johnson National Historical Park](#)
- *Manassas National Battlefield Park* - On November 9, the Prince William County (VA) Planning Commission recommended the denial of all three rezoning applications associated with the Prince William Digital Gateway data center proposal. The meeting lasted "almost 24 hours." The superintendent of Manassas, Kristofer Butcher, spoke against the project during the meeting. The Board of County Supervisors will vote on the project on December 12. Source: [Inside NOVA](#) [Editor note: *The Coalition has actively spoken out against the data center project (9/21/22, 1/14/22). More info on the history of the project can be found in the 5/18/22 and 8/23/23 Coalition Reports.*]
- *Mellon Humanities Postdoctoral Fellowship Program* (an NPS-administered program) - The NPS, National Park Foundation, and American Conservation Experience have opened applications for the program through December 1 or until



there are 75 applicants for each position, whichever comes first. The program pairs recent graduates of humanities-focused PhD programs with NPS sites and programs across the country to complete original research projects and develop new programming. Source: [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#)

- *Minidoka National Historic Site* - KUOW published [an article](#) by the descendent of a former prisoner at Minidoka making their first visit to the incarceration camp site during the annual pilgrimage in July. The article discusses the intergenerational trauma left behind in the wake of imprisonment, as well as the current Lava Ridge Wind Project (see more in next bullet). Source: *KUOW*
- *Minidoka National Historic Site* - The Congressional delegation from Idaho, Senators Jim Risch and Mike Crapo, and Representatives Mike Simpson and Russ Fulcher (all Republicans), have introduced a bill that would require the Secretary of the Interior to deny any wind or solar energy project proposed on public land that is disapproved by the legislature of the state in which it is proposed. The Idaho House of Representatives unanimously passed a resolution in March in opposition to the Lava Ridge Wind Project, which is proposed within the historic footprint of the camp (on Bureau of Land Management lands adjacent to the park). Source: [Idaho Press](#)  
[Editor note: The Coalition has also actively spoken out against the Lava Ridge wind project: see [8/15/23](#), [3/2/23](#), [7/14/22](#) actions]
- *Mojave National Preserve* - On November 13, the park began a project to renovate the public restrooms and parking area at Kelso Depot. The renovation is expected to be complete in mid-January 2024. Source: [Mojave National Preserve](#)
- *Mount Rainier National Park* - The *Seattle Times* published [an article](#) about the effects of melting glaciers on the mountaineering season for recreationalists and guides. Source: *Seattle Times*
- *National Historic Landmarks Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On November 9, the Buffalo (NY) Preservation Board voted to reject a covered entrance at the new Richardson Hotel, which is part of the Richardson Olmsted Campus, a National Historic Landmark. The entrance had been approved by the State Office of Historic Preservation and by the National Park Service in September. The Preservation Board said the size and scale of the steel structure was too large, interpreting the standards for historic preservation differently from the state and federal agencies. The developer said it will appeal the decision to the Common Council, which can accept or override the preservation board's decision. Source: [The Buffalo News](#)
- *North Cascades National Park* - The *Cascadia Daily News* published [an article](#) about the support and opposition surrounding the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's proposal to repopulate grizzly bears in the North Cascades. Public comment on the

proposal closed on November 13, and a final Environmental Impact Statement and Section 10(j) ruling (of the Endangered Species Act) are expected in early 2024.

Source: *Cascadia Daily News*

- *Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership* (an NPS-administered program) - On November 8, the Department of the Interior announced that the ORLP will distribute \$21.9 million in funding for the redevelopment or creation of new local parks in five states. More than \$224 million will be available in next year's cycle. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Pu'uuhonua o Hōnaunau National Historical Park* - The NPS signed a Finding of No Significant Impact for a plan to remove and replace park maintenance facilities. The current facilities are located near sensitive archaeological sites and near tidal and coastal zones. A new facility will be built much closer to the main administrative facility in the park. Source: [Big Island Video News](#)
- *Redwood National and State Parks* - The Yurok Wildlife Department is prepared to release three more condors ("*prey-go-neesh*" in Yurok) into Redwood National and State Parks once the conditions are right. The three 18-month-old condors were hatched and reared at the Los Angeles Zoo before being transferred to Yurok facility on October 9. They will become the ninth, tenth, and eleventh condors released through the Northern California Condor Restoration Program, which is managed jointly by the Yurok Tribe and the park. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - The park announced it will again implement a pilot timed-entry reservation system, starting May 24, 2024. The pilot will be similar to the previous year. Public comment is currently open on a long-range day use visitor access plan (see "Open for Public Comment" below). Source: [Rocky Mountain National Park](#)
- *Saguaro National Park* - On November 6, the park began the second phase of a project to repair and improve the Signal Hill Picnic Area. This phase will repair historic structures, provide greater accessibility, improve parking, and add a shade shelter. The first phase, completed earlier this year, constructed a new accessible restroom on site. The work is expected to be completed by March 13, 2024. Signal Hill itself remains open, though the picnic area will remain closed throughout the project. Parking will also be limited. Source: [Saguaro National Park](#)
- *Saguaro National Park* - The park was recently certified by DarkSky International as an Urban Night Sky Place. It is the ninth locale designated around the world and the second NPS unit to receive this certification, which acknowledges places whose planning and design promote authentic nighttime experiences despite significant artificial light intrusion from nearby urban areas. Source: [Saguaro National Park](#)

- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - The Yale School of the Environment published [an article](#) about the challenges to determining the best strategies for preserving giant sequoias in an era of global climate change and wildfire risks, including pushback by environmental groups against the proposed Save Our Sequoias bill. Source: *YaleEnvironment360*
- *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - A Mexican wolf has wandered into the southern end of the park, hundreds of miles from the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area. The individual is known for roaming, likely in search of a mate. The previous time it roamed that far north, the individual was moved back to the experimental population range. The Center for Biological Diversity currently has a lawsuit that is requesting revocation of the federal regulation that requires the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to remove wolves north of Interstate 40 because they feel it hinders the recovery of the population. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Voyageurs National Park* - On November 6, the park announced that they are still reviewing comments on a Frozen Lake Surface Access and Use Plan and any changes to current policies will be delayed until at least the winter of 2024-2025. There will be two more public comment periods before a final option is selected. Source: [Duluth News Tribune](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - *The New York Times* published [an article](#) about recent research presented at the Geological Society of America's annual meeting about microorganisms adapted to live in thermal features in the park. Source: *The New York Times*
- *Yellowstone National Park* - *KBZK* published [an article](#) about efforts to restore the park's whitebark pine forests, which have been devastated by wildfires, bark beetles, and blister rust disease. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology recently produced two videos about the subject; one is available [online](#) and the other will begin playing at Yellowstone visitor centers in Spring 2024. The films were funded by the Ricketts Foundation. Source: *KBZK*, Cornell Lab of Ornithology *YouTube* channel

### Personnel Changes

- *Aviation Program* - Brian Sutton was selected to be the new national aviation safety manager for the National Park Service. Brian has many years of aviation management experience, including a stint as the northern hub aviation manager for the NPS in Fairbanks, Alaska. He is the 2022 recipient of the NPS Wright Brothers National Aviation Safety Award. He was most recently the logistics management specialist and a contracting officer representative for the U.S. Army at Fort Wainwright in Alaska. He started his new role on November 5. Source: [National Park Service Aviation Program](#)

## **Park People**

*Here we honor deceased park employees, as well as important news about Coalition Members and other former park employees or volunteers. People are listed alphabetically by last name.*

### **Deceased**

- Dan Kimbrough, 83, passed away on November 6. Dan volunteered as a "National Park Service tour guide" at Vicksburg National Military Park in his retirement. Source: [MageeNews.com](#)
- Dave Price passed away on November 7. Dave was the resource management specialist at Colorado National Monument for a time and retired from the NPS "about 10 years ago." Source: Nancy Wizner, [Grand Valley Audubon Society](#)
- Douglas "Doug" P. Sabin, 88, passed away on November 6. Doug "had an extensive career with the National Park Service," including as a park guide at Salem Maritime National Historic Site and John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, chief of interpretation at Longfellow House Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, and chief historian at Minute Man National Historical Park. Source: [The Salem News](#)
- Charlotte Wenger, 97, passed away on September 15. She and her partner Gilbert Wenger worked for the National Park Service for several decades, working at many different units. They retired from Mesa Verde National Park in 1982. Source: [The Daily Sentinel](#)

### **Open for Comment**

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

- *Anacostia Park* - Public comment is [open through December 1](#) on preliminary management concepts for the future of the park. Source: [Anacostia Park](#)
- *Arches National Park* - Public comment is [open through December 1](#) on a visitor access and experience update, including the possibility of a more permanent timed-entry system. Source: [Arches National Park](#)
- *Everglades National Park* - Public comment is [open through November 30](#) on a plan to make improvements to the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida Osceola Camp so that the infrastructure there does not flood under restoration efforts taking place through the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan and Central Everglades Planning Project. Source: [Everglades National Park](#)
- *Everglades National Park* - Public comment is [open through December 12](#) on a plan to rehabilitate water and wastewater systems in the park. Source: [Everglades National Park](#)

- *Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve* - The Bureau of Land Management has [opened public comment through December 19](#) on a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Ambler Road project. Source: [Anchorage Daily News](#)
- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - The Bureau of Reclamation has opened public comment through December 11 on a [revised draft supplemental environmental impact statement for near-term Colorado River operations](#). The revision takes into account improved and newer hydrology data that affects the environmental impacts evaluated in the previous operations plan, as well as a concession of 3 million acre-feet funded for conservation in the Lower Basin States. Source: [Department of the Interior](#) [Editor note: An online comment platform wasn't available as of publishing, though a Notice of Availability has been filed, signaling that comment is open. See the [Federal Register](#) for more information.]
- *Grand Teton National Park* - Public comment is [open through January 11](#) on a master plan for the management and use of Colter Bay. Source: [Grand Teton National Park](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - The National Park Service and Federal Highway Administration have [opened public comment through November 18](#) on a proposal to construct/extend a section ("8D") of the Foothills Parkway from Wears Valley to the Spur near Gatlinburg. Source: [WBIR](#)
- *Haleakalā National Park* - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources have [opened public comment through November 22](#) on a plan to do a pilot release of 'alalā, or Hawaiian crow, in east Maui. The draft plan was done in coordination with Haleakalā staff and other partners. Source: [Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources \(Ka 'Oihana Kumuwaiwai 'Āina\)](#)
- *Mammoth Cave National Park* - Public comment is [open through November 29](#) on a plan to replace housing for seasonal employees. Source: [WBKO](#)
- *Mount Rainier National Park* - Public comment is [open through November 30](#) on an Accessibility Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. Source: [NBC Tri-Cities Yakima](#)
- *National Capital Parks - East* - Public comment is [open through December 9](#) on a design concept for a 1.25-acre park known as Parkland, located in Congress Heights. Parkland was identified as a priority for the community during a 2020 development concept plan for the Shepherd Parkway. Source: [National Capital Parks - East](#)

- *Olympic National Park* - Public comment is [open through November 22](#) on a plan for downstream mitigation during the replacement of the U.S. 101 Elwha River Bridge. An Environmental Assessment for the bridge was completed in 2021; this comment period is focused on improving river channel dynamics and providing salmonid habitat as compensatory mitigation. Source: [Olympic National Park](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - Public comment is [open through December 14](#) on a day use visitor access plan, including a timed entry reservation system. Source: [Estes Park News](#)
- *Theodore Roosevelt National Park* - Public comment has been [extended through November 24](#) on a Livestock Plan for the park. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)

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

- *Utah files appeal about Bears Ears and Grand Staircase* - On November 7, the Utah State Attorney General's Office filed an appeal against the August federal court decision to dismiss their lawsuit against the restoration of Bears Ears National Monument and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (both managed by the Bureau of Land Management) by President Joe Biden under the Antiquities Act in October 2021. Utah argues that the majority of the objects identified in the monuments do not meet the specific requirements of the law. Source: [The Spectrum](#)
- *Willow oil project upheld by federal court* - On November 9, a federal court upheld the Department of the Interior's approval of the Willow oil drilling project in the National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska. It rejected a request by a coalition of environmental and Iñupiat groups to vacate the March 2023 approval of the project based on climate change impacts they felt were not adequately considered during environmental analysis. The judge maintained that the leases were "subject to reasonable restrictions and mitigation measures imposed by the federal government" and were consistent with policy objectives for the reserve. Source: [Anchorage Daily News](#)
- *Wildfire smoke MOU* - On November 9, the Department of the Interior, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Agriculture, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced a Memorandum of Understanding and joint plan to protect communities from the impacts of wildfire smoke while also promoting land management practices that reduce the risk of severe fires. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Trilateral conservation MOU* - On November 9, the Executive Committee of the North American Intergovernmental Committee on Cooperation for Protected Areas signed an updated Memorandum of Understanding to allow for continued cooperation between the United States, Canada, and Mexico for shared

conservation efforts. Strategic priorities for the group include Indigenous stewardship of protected areas, connectivity and corridors, and grassland and bison conservation. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

- *15 onshore clean energy projects* - On November 6, the Department of the Interior announced it is advancing 15 onshore renewable energy projects across the western United States on Bureau of Land Management lands. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Energy revenue disbursement* - On November 9, the Department of the Interior's Office of Natural Resources Revenue announced the disbursement of \$18.24 billion in FY 2023 energy production revenue through a variety of funds, to federal agencies, and directly to states and Tribes with energy projects in their borders. 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**

**November 1** – The Senate passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act, H.R.4366, making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024. The bill was amended by the Senate and will require a conference with the House before final language will be available.

The Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship concluded a hearing to examine small businesses and America's outdoor recreation economy, including:

- S. 1411, to amend title 5, United States Code, to require greater transparency for federal regulatory decisions that impact small businesses;
- S. 1744, to amend the Small Business Act to reauthorize the SCORE program;
- S. 2185, to amend the Small Business Act to require an annual report on entrepreneurial development programs;
- S. 873, to improve recreation opportunities on, and facilitate greater access to, federal public land (see more below); and
- S. 2611, to require the Secretary of Agriculture to expand the snow survey and water supply forecasting program to serve the Northeastern United States.

The Committee heard testimony from Jessica Wahl Turner, Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, Washington, D.C.; Rebecca Peters, Vacation Okoboji, Arnolds Park, Iowa; Andrew Drummond, Ski The Whites, LLC, Jackson, New Hampshire; and Christopher

Fox, Ducks Unlimited, Johnston, Iowa.

S. 873, America's Outdoor Recreation Act of 2023, addresses issues regarding public recreation and access to recreation on federal lands and waters, including special recreation permits for outfitting and guiding. Among other provisions, the bill requires the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to identify long-distance bike trails and opportunities to develop or complete long-distance bike trails; USDA to issue guidance relating to climbing management for National Forest System land; Interior and USDA to identify and establish target shooting ranges within national forests and Bureau of Land Management districts; and Interior and the U.S. Forest Service to enter into an agreement with the Department of Commerce to foster the installation or construction of broadband internet infrastructure at developed recreation sites on federal recreational lands and waters.

S. 873 would also require that the Interior and the Forest Service conduct a single inventory and assessment of recreation resources for federal recreational lands and waters and publish the inventory and assessment for public comment; Interior establish a Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation; Interior and the U.S. Forest Service (1) alert the public to closure or disruption of public campsites, trails, roads, and other public areas and access points; and (2) develop and make public a national strategy to increase the number of youth recreation visits to federal land.

S. 873 also provides for online collection of recreation fees and for the establishment of a digital version of America the Beautiful - The National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Passes.

**November 2** - The Committee on Appropriations announced the following assignments for the 118th Congress for the Subcommittee on Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies: Senators Jeff Merkley (Chair), Jack Reed, Jon Tester, Chris Van Hollen, Martin Heinrich, Gary Peters, Kyrsten Sinema, Lisa Murkowski, Mitch McConnell, Shelley Moore Capito, John Hoeven, Deb Fischer, and Katie Britt.

### **House Actions**

**November 1** - The Committee on Rules held a hearing on H.R. 4820, the "Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2024;" H.R. 4821, the "Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2024;" and H.R. 6126, the "Israel Security Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2024." The Committee granted a rule providing for consideration of H.R. 4821, H.R. 4820, and H.R. 6126. The rule provides for consideration of H.R. 4821 under a structured rule.

**November 2** - H.R. 838 was filed providing for consideration of the H.R. 4821 making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, environment, and related agencies for the Fiscal Year ending September 30, 2024, and for other purposes.



**November 3** - Reports were filed as follows:

- H.R. 359, to establish Fort San Gerónimo del Boquerón in Puerto Rico as an affiliated area of the National Park System, and for other purposes;
- H.R. 3448, to amend chapter 3081 of title 54, United States Code, to enhance the protection and preservation of America's battlefields, with an amendment;
- H.R. 2717, to authorize the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation to establish a commemorative work on the National Mall to honor the extraordinary acts of valor, selfless service, and sacrifice displayed by Medal of Honor recipients, with an amendment; and
- H.R. 1318, to authorize the location of a monument on the National Mall to commemorate and honor the women's suffrage movement and the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, and for other purposes.

The House passed H.R. 4821, the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2024, making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, environment, and related agencies for the Fiscal Year ending September 30, 2024, and for other purposes, by a yea-and-nay vote of 213 yeas to 203 nays.

**November 6** - The House passed:

- American Battlefield Protection Program Enhancement Act of 2023, H.R. 3448, amended, to amend chapter 3081 of title 54, United States Code, to enhance the protection and preservation of America's battlefields;
- Fort San Gerónimo Preservation Act, H.R. 359, to establish Fort San Gerónimo del Boquerón in Puerto Rico as an affiliated area of the National Park System;
- Women's Suffrage National Monument Location Act, H.R. 1318, to authorize the location of a monument on the National Mall to commemorate and honor the women's suffrage movement and the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution.

## **Incidents**

*Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.*

### **Cape Hatteras National Seashore**

#### **Soil contaminants uncovered**

On September 1, shortly after Tropical Storm Idalia, a resident on Hatteras Island called park staff to report a strong diesel smell coming from the area of the old U.S. Navy base, as well as a sheen on the nearby ocean waters. Staff investigated the site and noted the diesel smell. The U.S. Coast Guard took soil samples, which showed contamination from petroleum. That section of beach was closed. About two weeks after the closure, surfers in the area reported headaches and rashes. On September 26, the Dare County Department of Health and Human Services issued a public alert to avoid swimming,

fishing, or wading in the area. Large clumps of oily peat soil were scattered over the beach. The Coast Guard took further samples, showing a variety of contaminants related to petroleum and oils. The site had a petroleum leak by U.S. Navy equipment in 1997 that had been "partially cleaned up" and buried in the early 2000s, which the Army Corps of Engineers has been working to remediate ever since. While doing routine groundwater remediation on site, they were present "when the odor was strongest" and also took a soil sample that confirmed petroleum contamination. Though the petroleum cannot be definitively tied to the 1997 leaks due to complications with testing and saltwater, the Army Corps announced on October 23 that it would take responsibility for the clean-up. The Corps' Formerly Used Defense Sites program has plans to address the site more extensively. The Coast Guard is also implementing a "Phase II environmental assessment" of potential contaminants at the site. Source: [CoastalReview.org](https://www.coastalreview.org)

## **Death Valley National Park**

### **Semitruck rollover**

On November 5, a semitruck traveling down a steep grade on CA-190 west of Towne Pass lost control and overturned several times, scattering its cargo of beehives. Other visitors extracted the 35-year-old driver from the truck, getting stung by bees in the process. California Highway Patrol and National Park Service staff responded and provided medical assistance to the driver, who had traumatic injuries from the rollover, as well as bee stings. The patient was driven by ambulance to Panamint Springs Resort, then taken by a Mercy Air helicopter to Antelope Valley Hospital. Source: [Death Valley National Park](https://www.nps.gov/deathvalley/learn/management/plant-life/semitruck-rollover)

## **Golden Gate National Recreation Area**

### **Body discovered**

On November 12, 911 dispatchers in San Francisco received a call about a person lying in the parking lot of East Beach at Crissy Field. Responding paramedics found the individual deceased. The U.S. Park Police and San Francisco Fire Department also responded. The FBI is leading the investigation. Source: [NBC Bay Area](https://www.nbc.com/news/health/911-dispatchers-sf-body), [San Francisco Chronicle](https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/SF-911-dispatchers-find-dead-body-in-parking-lot-14674777)

## **Great Smoky Mountains National Park**

### **Crash rescue**

On November 1, a "vehicle incident" occurred on Little River Road west of The Sinks, resulting in the need for a water rescue. Responding agencies included the park's swiftwater and technical rescue team, the Blount County (TN) Sheriff's Office's special dive team, Townsend Volunteer Fire Department, Blount Special Operations Response Team, and American Medical Response. Two people were taken to the hospital after the incident. The road was closed for several hours during the rescue and then reopened. Source: [WBIR](https://www.wbir.com/story/news/local/2023/11/01/vehicle-incident-great-smoky-mountains-national-park/7048444002), [WATE](https://www.wate.com/story/news/local/2023/11/01/vehicle-incident-great-smoky-mountains-national-park/7048444002)

## **Guadalupe Mountains National Park**

### **Missing hiker found**

On November 2, a 71-year-old went on a hike from Dog Canyon to Blue Ridge. The individual was expected to check into a hotel that evening but never arrived. A search ensued, including ground and air teams from the NPS, Department of Public Safety, U.S. Border Patrol, and Texas Search and Rescue. The individual was found alive on November 6 "in a remote off-trail location in the northern part of the park." Source: [KTSM](#)

### **Lake Mead National Recreation Area**

#### **Fecal bacteria**

On November 7, the park closed the Arizona Hot Springs, its associated trail, and the White Rock Canyon parking lot on Highway 93 due to high levels of fecal bacteria in the water. The park does routine water monitoring around the park for safety, which revealed the issue. No illnesses have been report thus far. When the water quality is back to federal and state standards of safety, the areas will reopen. Source: [KJZZ](#)

### **New River Gorge National Park and Preserve**

#### **Wildfire**

On November 6, the Steep Valley Fire was spotted about a mile south of Prince, West Virginia, across the river from Grandview. As of November 11, the fire had grown to 1,946 acres and was 50% contained. The War Ridge Campground and access road are currently closed. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#), [New River Gorge National Park and Preserve](#)

### **Point Reyes National Seashore**

#### **Ocean fatality**

On November 10, a person was swept into the ocean at South Beach. A rescue response of personal watercrafts, swimmers, a lifeboat, and four helicopters was dispatched. The victim was found about an hour later and airlifted to South Beach, where they were pronounced deceased. The NPS is investigating the incident. Source: [Marin Independent Journal](#)

### **Ross Lake National Recreation Area**

#### **Human remains found**

On October 12, two anglers found possible human remains inside a suitcase in a "remote area" of the park. The individuals told NPS staff about their discovery. The Whatcom County (WA) Sheriff's Office is investigating the incident and no other details have yet been released. Source: [KATV](#)

### **Shenandoah National Park**

#### **Wildfire**

On October 26, the Quaker Run Fire was spotted in the Rapidan Wildlife Management Area. It has been slowly growing; as of November 12, it has burned about 3,877 acres, including about 670 acres in the park near Whiteoak and Old Rag. It is about 40% contained with 201 personnel assigned. Within the park, efforts have been focused on keeping the fire away from historic Rapidan Camp, also known as Camp Hoover because of its use by President Herbert Hoover. As of November 9, closures included the Graves Mill Trail, Wilhite Wagon Trail, Mill Prong Trail and Horse Trail, Stony Mountain trail, Fork Mountain Trail, Laurel Prong from Cat Knob intersection, Upper Dark Hollow Trail, and the lower Rapidan Fire Road beyond the portion open to bicycles. The powerline that supplies the Big Meadows area was de-energized for firefighter safety, so the Big Meadows Lodge closed for the season on November 6, which was a week earlier than already planned. Other infrastructure at Big Meadows, including the visitor center and campground, remain open by use of generators. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#), [Wildfire Today](#), [Shenandoah National Park](#), [News Leader](#), [The Daily Progress](#)

### **Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore NPS found guilty of lack of maintenance**

In 2021, Manitou Island Transit, a concessioner providing ferry service to North and South Manitou Islands on contract with the National Park Service, sued the NPS for failing to maintain the landing areas at both islands. The failure to dredge sand caused their business to be unable to perform its services between May and November 2020. On October 26, a U.S. Court of Federal Claims found that the NPS violated its contract. The lawsuit is seeking \$500,000 in compensatory damages. Hearings to determine damages will be scheduled at a later date. Source: [Traverse City Record Eagle](#)

### **Statue of Liberty National Monument Gaza sit-in**

On November 6, a group of about 500 protestors affiliated with the group Jewish Voice for Peace staged a sit-in at the base of the Statue of Liberty to call for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. The protest was peaceful and lasted about 30 minutes. There was no damage to park resources. No arrests were made. Source: [The Art Newspaper](#)

### **U.S. Park Police Accidental off-duty officer shooting**

The night of November 4, three off-duty U.S. Park Police officers and one other individual were gathered at an apartment in McLean, Virginia. A 25-year-old, one of the officers, attempted to simulate discharging a weapon, which was believed to be unloaded. When the individual pulled the trigger, the gun fired, killing a 22-year-old (also an off-duty officer). Officers from Fairfax County responded. "Alcohol is believed to be a factor in the shooting." The suspect was charged with involuntary manslaughter and is being held without bond. The incident is still under investigation. Source: [CBS News](#)

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

- *Petroglyph National Monument* - The NPS has filed for dismissal of a lawsuit by the individual who was tased by officers in the park in December 2020 (see [12/28/22 Coalition Report](#)). The individual's attorneys have not yet responded to the filings. Source: [KRQE](#)
- *Rock Creek Park* - On November 9, the NPS gave an update on the ongoing investigation of World War I-era munitions at Fort Totten Park (see [4/26/23](#) and [5/10/23 Coalition Reports](#)). The two metal canisters found in April were identified and assessed for hazardous material by the U.S. Army's Material Assessment Review Board, which found that neither munition posed a hazard to human health. The area of Fort Totten Park remains closed and fenced with "no trespassing" signs, as there may be further munitions in the area. The NPS and Army are seeking funding to conduct a comprehensive investigation of the park. Source: [Rock Creek Park](#)

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If you see something that might be of interest to Coalition members, send it to [report@protectnps.org](mailto:report@protectnps.org).

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The Coalition is a non-profit organization of past and current NPS employees and their allies that "studies, educates, speaks, and acts for the preservation and protection of the National Park System and mission-related programs of the National Park Service."

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