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## **The Coalition Report**

### **Wednesday, October 4, 2023**

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#### **Coalition Actions**

The Coalition joined with more than 20 organizations in submitting extensive [comments](#) to the Bureau of Land Management on the proposed rule on fluid mineral leases and the leasing process. We encouraged the BLM to proceed expeditiously with the rulemaking process.

Through the National Parks Second Century Action Coalition, the Coalition signed a [letter](#) to Congress urging passage of a continuing resolution. Additionally, the letter urges Congress not to cut the appropriations for public lands.

The Coalition provided [comments](#) on visitor use management at Glacier National Park. Among other things, the comments recommends the park establish a overall visitor carrying capacity and create opportunities for adaptive management strategies as data becomes available.

The *Daily Inter Lake* published an [op-ed](#) by Coalition Executive Council Members Don Neubacher and Linda Mazzu in support of the visitor management system at Glacier National Park. They expressed opposition to U.S. Representative Ryan Zinke's amendment to the Interior appropriations bill, which would defund the ticket system at Glacier. Additionally, they called on Congress to support the parks by providing adequate funding.

The Coalition issued a [press release](#) supporting the designation of the Chuckwalla National Monument, adjacent to Joshua Tree National Park.

We issued a [press release](#) thanking Interior Secretary Deb Haaland for visiting Molok Luyuk and urging Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument be expanded to incorporate this area.

The Coalition joined with the National Parks Conservation Association and the Sierra Club in submitting detailed [comments](#) to the Environmental Protection Agency on the proposed approval of the Maryland 2nd Period Regional Haze Plan.

*WyoFile* published an [article](#) evaluating whether the cost of visiting national parks has become prohibitive for middle-class American families. In the article, Coalition Chair Mike Murray noted that camping reservations are now required, where as in the past, families would be able to find a site upon arrival. He also noted that parks suffer from chronic underfunding and declining staffing levels.

The Coalition hosted the next installment of the Take Action Webinar Series: "Government Shutdowns and the Impacts for Our Parks and Public Lands." Phil Francis, Cheryl Schreier, and Sheridan Steele presented. The webinar is available to view [online](#). The *Wall Street Journal* cited Sheridan Steele and the Coalition's webinar in its [article](#) anticipating a government shutdown. During the webinar, Sheridan shared that shutdown implications vary among parks. We also issued a [press release](#) condemning the looming shutdown (now averted) and Congress' failure to do its job. Additionally, Coalition Chair Mike Murray expressed disappointment with leaving areas of some parks accessible to the public, which would leave them vulnerable.

Coalition Chair Mike Murray authored an [op-ed](#) in *National Parks Traveler* on the impacts of climate change on parks. The article highlighted three proposed rules from the Environmental Protection Agency which would reduce emissions from top climate polluters.

The Coalition submitted detailed [comments](#) on scoping for Point Reyes National Seashore's Tomales Point Area Plan. The letter includes support for Alternative B: Unconfined Elk Herd and Pierce Ranch Core Area.

*National Parks Traveler* reported on the Office of Inspector General's report on the National Park Service's management of deferred maintenance. Coalition Chair Mike Murray was [quoted in the article](#), expressing that the report presents an inaccurate depiction of the current status, noting that six of the eight recommendations in the report already have been implemented.

### **[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.*

- *Government shutdown averted* - On September 30, Congress passed a bill to fund the government through November 17. The Department of the Interior had published [a news release](#) the day prior, outlining the plan for closure of most National Park Service units across the country with coverage for "activities necessary to protect life and property." With the bill passed, national parks remain open. Source: Department of the Interior, [NBC News](#)
- *Phase out of single-use plastics* - On September 28, the Department of the Interior announced its plan to phase out single-use plastics on public lands within the next decade. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Federal report on wildfire management* - On September 27, the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission released a report with a series of recommendations to Congress to address the U.S.' wildfire crisis. The report recommends taking new approaches to financial incentives and agency metrics, more interagency collaboration, shifting more resources to being proactive rather than reactive, utilizing more "beneficial fire," expanding the wildfire workforce, modernizing fire-related science, data, and technology, and increasing funding for mitigation. The report was crafted by 50 individuals from many different agencies and sectors over the last year. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Whitebark pine restoration efforts* - The NPS and the non-profit American Forests signed a five-year agreement to help return threatened whitebark pine to its range in the western United States. The effort is being supported by \$44 million in Inflation Reduction Act funding. The first round of restoration will take place in Yellowstone, Glacier, and Grand Teton National Parks. Source: [Cision PRWeb](#)
- *National Public Lands Day* - Many parks celebrated National Public Lands Day on September 23 with events. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland wrote [an article](#) for *Outside* about her relationship with public lands, including mention of a family trip to Canyon de Chelly National Monument. Source: *Outside*
- *Recreation.gov lawsuit dropped* - On September 25, the plaintiffs in a lawsuit accusing Booz Allen Hamilton, Inc., of excessive "junk fees" voluntarily dismissed their case after nine months of pretrial motions and discovery. No specific reason was given for the dismissal. Source: [RV Travel](#)
- *National parks inspired better roads* - *The Aspen Times* published [an article](#) about the history of highways in the western United States, including the role of first-NPS Director Stephen Mather in forming the National Park-to-Park Highway Association and advocating for road improvements to support the tourism industry. Source: *The Aspen Times*

## **Around the Parks**

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Acadia National Park* - This month, the park has started testing electric buses for use on its Island Explorer bus routes. The pilot project is being supported by the U.S. Departments of Energy and Transportation. If the pilot is successful, electric buses will be phased in over many years to replace the current propane-fueled buses. Source: [Maine Public Radio](#)
- *American Battlefield Protection Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On September 20, the NPS awarded \$3.3 million in Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants to protect 120 acres across five battlefields in three states. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Big Bend National Park* - On October 3, the NPS and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department began conducting a 2-week survey to protect the desert bighorn sheep. During the survey, the Deadhorse Mountains and surrounding areas, including the Dagger Flat Road and Old Ore Road, will be closed. Aerial shooting from helicopters will also occur during this time to cull non-native Barbary sheep. Source: [Midland Reporter-Telegram](#)
- *Big Bend National Park* - *Texas Monthly* published [an article](#) about an increase in heat-related deaths and possible management solutions. An incident at Big Bend this summer was included in the article, as well as the NPS' decision to not close trails, choosing to focus on educating visitors on safety. Source: *Texas Monthly*
- *Cane River Creole National Historical Park* - On September 19, park staff joined Louisiana Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser, the Louisiana Office of Tourism, the Cane River National Heritage Area, and the City of Natchitoches to designate the Texas and Pacific Railway Depot in Natchitoches as the newest marker on the Louisiana Civil Rights Trail. The depot was recently converted as the new headquarters and visitor center for the park. Source: [KTBS](#)
- *Canyonlands National Park* - The U.S. Geological Survey published [an article](#) about a 24-year study of plants in a never-grazed grassland area of the park to assess ecosystem resilience to climate change and invasive plants. They found the native plant community has adapted well to the warmer, drier climate, with plant cover similar to surveys done in 1967. Source: U.S. Geological Survey
- *Cape Cod National Seashore* - On October 6, the Beech Forest in the park will be formally inducted into the national Old-Growth Forest Network. Source: [Cape Cod National Seashore](#)
- *Cape Cod National Seashore* - On September 29, the Department of the Interior established an agreement with Salvatore Del Deo for a five-year special use permit for the ongoing use of a Provincetown dune shack known as "Frenchie's." The

family has been using the shack since 1946. The family was evicted from the shack in June due to a change in the management of the shacks, including opening up their use to 10-year leases. Though Frenchie's was not up for bid, the family was evicted and told it would come up for bid in a later round. The eviction brought heavy media attention, statements by public officials, and a small protest at the park (see [7/4/23](#), [7/26/23](#), [8/9/23](#), [8/23/23](#) *Coalition Reports*). Source: [Boston Globe](#)

- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - On September 25, the NPS awarded a \$3.6 million contract to Terra Site Constructors, LLC, to raise, make repairs, and improve accessibility at the Double Keepers' Quarters and several other structures at the Ocracoke Light Station. Source: [WNCT](#)
- *Congaree National Park* - *The Post and Courier* published [an article](#) about the park's growing visitation and possible management solutions. Source: *The Post and Courier*
- *Everglades National Park* - On October 27, the park and its concession, Everglades Guest Services, will host a grand opening event for the newly reconstructed (and renamed) Guy Bradley Visitor Center and Flamingo Lodge and Restaurant. Both were damaged by hurricanes in 2005 and 2017. Lodge reservations are now being accepted for reservations in November and beyond. Source: [Everglades National Park](#)
- *Fort Necessity National Battlefield* - *The Greene County Messenger* published [an article](#) about the efforts of the NPS' Eastern Rivers and Mountains Network to conduct fish surveys in Great Meadows Run, a small creek in the park. Source: *Greene County Messenger*
- *Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park* - Later this month, the park will begin a project to repair the brick masonry wall around the Fredericksburg National Cemetery. The project is expected to take about four months. Source: [Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - *The Engineering News-Record* published [an article](#) about the park's push to complete improvements on 13 bridges in the park, as well as "Phase 10," the final phase of repair work on the Going-to-the-Sun Road, which began 16 years ago. The article outlines the challenges and methods used to execute construction in the park. Source: *ENR Mountain States*
- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area* - *High Country News* published [an article](#) about the intrusion of non-native smallmouth bass downriver of Glen Canyon Dam, its threats to native fish populations, and attempts to manage the situation. Source: *High Country News*
- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - Nicki Phelps was awarded the 2022 James

- V. Murfin Award for Cooperating Associations and Partnerships for over 30 years of work partnering with the NPS. Nicki is currently the Vice President of Visitor Programs and Services at the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Grand Teton National Park* - The *Jackson Hole News and Guide* published [an article](#) about the complexity of water management in the Snake River, including an effort to buy water rights from Idaho farmers to manage the river's water level for ecological purposes. 96% of the water in the Upper Snake River Basin is owned by Idaho farmers. Recent drawdowns from Jackson Lake Dam have caused consternation among local environmentalists and the recreation industry. Source: *Jackson Hole News and Guide*
  - *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - On September 22, the park announced that it has reopened the Mauna Loa Summit Cabin for overnight use after conducting maintenance and reflagging the 'Āinapō Trail. The area had been closed due to the November 2022 Mauna Loa eruption. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)
  - *Honouliuli National Historic Site* - On October 11, the NPS, Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, and Bayer Hawaii will host a blessing event and plaque dedication ceremony to commemorate the Honouliuli Memorial. A new seating area and plaque about the site's history have been arranged to allow for quiet reflection. A Historic Preservation Center crew is also working to restoring the site's iconic rock wall, which will be complete in several weeks' time. Source: [Cision PR Newswire](#)
  - *Hopewell Culture National Historical Park* - On October 14, the park will host an official commemoration ceremony for its recent UNESCO World Heritage Site designation (see [9/20/23 Coalition Report](#)). Two other (non-NPS) Hopewell sites in the region included in the designation also will host commemorations, on October 7 and 15. *Slate* also published [an article](#) about the designation, as well as the obscurity and significance of the sites. Park archaeologist Bret Ruby is quoted in the article. Source: [Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, Slate](#)
  - *Joshua Tree National Park* - On September 27, the park announced that it has received \$920,000 in grant funding from the California State Parks' Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Division to restore and protect lands previously damaged by illegal OHV use and support education and outreach efforts. Source: [Joshua Tree National Park](#)
  - *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - On September 23, the park held a special ceremony to name a fire rescue boat after Ranger James P. Fleetwood, who was killed by an intoxicated driver in July 1977. Three of James' children and two grandchildren participated in the ceremony. Source: [KTNV](#)

- *Lassen Volcanic National Park* - On September 22, the park announced that they have started a project to repair Highway 89 in the Sulphur Works area, which was damaged by heavy snowpack last winter. The work is being done by Hooker Creek Construction. It is expected to be complete by this winter. Road closures will take place from 8 a.m.-12 p.m. and 1-5 p.m. on weekdays. Source: [Lassen Volcanic National Park](#)
- *Mammoth Cave National Park* - On September 28, the park celebrated the completion of a project to rehabilitate one mile of cave trail on the Domes and Dripstones tour route. The project was funded by the Great American Outdoors Act and executed by McGary Construction. The construction process was largely carried out by hand, and took one year to complete. Public cave tours on the route will resume this month. Source: [Mammoth Cave National Park](#)
- *Mesa Verde National Park* - *Aspen Public Radio* published [an article](#) about the park's new Indigenous Ranger Intern program and other efforts to better include Indigenous perspectives at the park. Source: *Aspen Public Radio*
- *National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom* (an NPS-administered program) - On September 27, the NPS announced the addition of 23 new listings to the network, including its first international site, which is in Canada. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Reconstruction Era National Historic Network* (an NPS-administered program) - On September 26, the NPS announced the addition of four new sites to the network. Source: [Reconstruction Era National Historical Park](#)
- *Redwood National and State Parks* - The Yale School of the Environment published [an article](#) about efforts to restore redwood forests due to the large amount of carbon they can store and the rapidity at which they can grow. The "Redwoods Rising" initiative by the parks and the Save the Redwoods League is mentioned as one example. Source: *YaleEnvironment360*
- *Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* - *National Public Radio's* "All Things Considered" program published [a piece](#) about Paramount Ranch's history, including the 2018 Woolsey Fire that burned most of its structures and the NPS' efforts to rebuild. The park hopes to bring film and TV shoots back to the location by 2025. Source: *National Public Radio*
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Yosemite National Park* - *The Guardian* published [an article](#) about Charlie Castro, a retired 42-year NPS employee who was best known for his work climbing trees to fight fires. Charlie grew up in Wauhoga, Yosemite's last Native village. Source: *The Guardian*
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - On September 26, Wilderness Watch,

- Sequoia ForestKeeper, and Tule River Conservancy filed a lawsuit against the park's decision to implement extensive motorized tree cutting and burning across designated Wilderness areas in the park. The park authorized the decision through an "emergency" provision, bypassing National Environmental Policy Act environmental assessments, including public comment. The litigants claim that it is not a qualified emergency and NEPA should have been followed. Source: [Snow Brains, Courthouse News Service](#)
- *Shenandoah National Park* - On September 27, the *Today* show featured [a 5-minute segment](#) in which host Al Roker visited Shenandoah to learn about national parks, including being sworn in as junior ranger and going on a visitor rove. Ranger Karl Rand is featured in the segment. Source: *Today*
  - *St. Croix National Scenic Riverway* - The St. Croix Scenic Coalition and several individuals have filed a lawsuit against Village of Osceola, which approved plans to build an apartment building on the site of a shuttered hospital, adjacent to the St. Croix River. The plaintiffs argue that the building will be "visually conspicuous," in conflict with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The NPS previously raised concerns to village officials about the building's height and its potential conflicts with the Act. Source: [StarTribune](#)
  - *Steamtown National Historic Site* - In late August, the Lackawanna & Wyoming Valley Railway Historical Society announced that its formal partnership with the NPS to restore a Boston & Maine Railroad 3713 engine has come to an end after over 25 years. The society previously served as the fundraiser for the project while the park executed the restoration. Ultimately, the park required a philanthropic agreement to continue the partnership and meetings became tense between the two groups. Upon dissolution, \$184,000 was turned over to the park and placed in a special account that can only be used for locomotive restoration. The park has stated that large component contracting and planning has begun for some of the engine's major components and it will be a primary focus for the restoration shop later this year. Source: [The Times-Tribune](#)
  - *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - On September 29, the park began the second phase of decommissioning a retired natural gas pipeline that cuts across the northern part of the park. The work is being funded by the New Mexico Gas Company. It includes smoothing out the old roadbed, removing berms, installing water bars and plugs, removing culverts, and restoring ecological conditions. Going forward, the route will remain closed to all vehicle traffic. Restoration is expected to be complete by the end of November. Source: [Valles Caldera National Preserve](#)
  - *Virgin Islands National Park* - On September 28, a federal court granted a motion to stay the trial concerning the September 30, 2023, expiration of the Caneel Bay Resort Retained Use Estate, while the court moves to resolve the case. The NPS announced it would not take steps to manage or assume possession of the



property until receiving further notice from the court. Source: [Virgin Islands National Park](#)

- *Zion National Park* - On September 25, the park began a project to fix the Kolob Canyons Road, which was damaged during a landslide earlier in the year. The project is being supported by the Federal Highway Administration. It is expected to be complete in Winter 2023. During construction, the road and all trailheads will be closed to all visitors, including bikes and pedestrians. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Zion National Park* - The park has put five new electric buses into service. They were acquired with a \$33 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation. The park eventually will replace its whole fleet with electric buses. Source: [FOX13](#)

### **Personnel Changes**

- *Appalachian National Scenic Trail* - Ed Clark was selected as the new superintendent. Ed has several decades of NPS experience, most recently as the senior project manager at the Pacific West Region. Source: [Appalachian National Scenic Trail](#)
- *Cape Cod National Seashore* - Jennifer Flynn was selected as the new superintendent. Jennifer has 32 years of NPS experience, most recently as the associate director for visitor and resource protection at NPS headquarters. She will begin her new role in mid-November. Source: [Cape Cod National Seashore](#)
- *National Capital Region* - Tammy Stidham was selected as the new associate regional director for lands and planning. Tammy has over 30 years of experience, most recently as the deputy associate regional director for lands and planning at the National Capital Region. Source: [National Capital Area \(Region 1\)](#)
- *President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home* - Steve Akins was selected as the new superintendent. Steve has seven years of NPS experience, most recently as the safety manager for the Southeast Region (Region 2). Source: [President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home](#)
- *Wildland Fire Program* - Alyssa Givens has been selected as the new health and wellness coordinator, through a partnership with the U.S. Public Health Service. Alyssa has 13 years of USPHS experience, most recently detailed to the U.S. Marshals Service as the aeromedical branch chief. Source: [National Park Service Wildland Fire 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**

- William "Bill" G. Binnewies, 87, passed away recently. Bill worked for the NPS for many years, including seasonal assignments at Saguaro National Park, Yosemite National Park, and Timpanogos Cave National Monument, and superintendentcies at Navajo National Monument, Cedar Breaks National Monument, Tuzigoot National Monument, Morristown National Historical Park/Thomas Edison National Historical Park, Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, and Canyon De Chelly National Monument. Source: Robert Binnewies
- Philip "Phil" John Campbell, 76, passed away on August 30. Phil worked for the NPS for 41 years as a law enforcement ranger and "park manager" and retired in 2009. He worked at many parks, including National Capital Parks East, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, Lake Chelan National Recreation Area, Niobrara National Scenic River, Missouri National Recreational River, and Obed Wild and Scenic River. Source: [Dignity Memorial](#)
- U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), 90, passed away on September 28. Senator Feinstein's advocacy led to the 1994 passage of the California Desert Protection Act, which established Death Valley and Joshua Tree National Parks (from National Monument status) and Mojave National Preserve. Source: [Environment America](#)
- Michael "Mike" Robblee, 75, passed away on August 16. Mike had a "30-year federal career" as a marine ecologist at Everglades National Park and the U.S. Geological Survey, and also conducted work at Biscayne National Park. Source: [Legacy/Miami Herald](#), William Loftus

## **Retired**

- Fred Koegler retired from the NPS on September 25 after a 59-year career as a mounted patrol ranger in Yosemite National Park. King, his most recent patrol horse, is also retiring after 20+ years of service. Source: [YourCentralValley.com](#)
- Alisa Lynch retired from the NPS on September 30 after a 34-year NPS career. She worked at Yosemite National Park, Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts, Independence National Historical Park, Big Bend National Park, Mount Rainier National Park, and her final 22 years at Manzanar National Historic Site, where she retired as the chief of interpretation. Source: [The Rafu Shimpo](#)

## **In the News**

- Reed Robinson, a former employee of the NPS for 30 years, was mentioned in a recent U.S. Forest Service [article](#) for his efforts leading the Office of Tribal Relations since 2020, including the support of a new Tribal Action Plan for the agency.

Source: U.S. Forest Service

- David Vela, former Director of the National Park Service and former superintendent of Lyndon B Johnson National Historical Park, will give a lecture at the Lyndon B. Johnson Museum of San Marcos on October 26. The lecture is called, "A Portrait of Lady Bird: Memories of a Friend and former Superintendent of LBJ National Historical Park." Source: [San Marcos Daily Record](#)

### **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](#)
- *Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area* - Public comment is open through November 1 on a plan to increase campground and picnic shelter fees, to open the Blue Heron Overlook Gazebo for reservations, and to add campsites to [Recreation.gov](#) for advance reservations. Comments can be submitted via mail or email. Source: [Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area](#)
- *Canaveral National Seashore* - Public comment is open through October 28 on a plan to increase entrance fees to better support infrastructure and maintenance needs at the park. Comments can be submitted via email. Source: [Canaveral National Seashore](#)
- *Cedar Breaks National Monument* - Public comment is [open through October 31](#) on a plan to increase entrance and camping fees. Source: [Cedar Breaks National Monument](#)
- *Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park* - Public comment is [open through October 31](#) on a Land Protection Plan, which allows the park to consider private or other nonfederal land or interests, cooperative approaches, and possible protection methods for resources of interest to the park. Source: [Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park](#)
- *Chiricahua National Monument* - Public comment is open through October 7 on a plan to increase camping fees at Bonita Canyon Campground. Source: [Chiricahua National Monument](#) [Editor note: The PEPC site for this project was not available when checked; comments also are possible by mail.]
- *Death Valley National Park* - Public comment is [open through October 25](#) on a plan to increase fees for backcountry permits and campgrounds. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)
- *Fort Dupont Park* - The National Park Service and District of Columbia Department

- of Energy and Environment have [opened public comment through October 4](#) on a proposed Fort Dupont Creek stream and wetland restoration project. Source: [Fort Dupont Park](#)
- *George Washington Memorial Parkway* - Public comment is [open through October 24](#) on a plan to improve the southern section of the parkway and the Mount Vernon Trail. Source: [DCist](#), [George Washington Memorial Parkway](#)
  - *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through October 6](#) on a proposed plan to change boat fees to a tiered system, based on vessel length. Source: [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#)
  - *Grand Teton National Park* - Public comment is [open through October 10](#) on visitor use and experience in the park. A [storymap](#) is available. Source: [Grand Teton National Park](#)
  - *Indiana Dunes National Park* - Public comment is [open through October 18](#) on a plan to enter into an agreement with Porter County (IN) to build a 6.3-mile section of the Marquette Greenway Trail, including a reroute of the existing Calumet Trail, which is in a "flooded utility corridor." Source: [Indiana Dunes National Park](#)
  - *North Cascades National Park* - The NPS and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have [opened public comment through November 13](#) on a proposal to reintroduce grizzly bears to the North Cascades Ecosystem. Source: [Conservation Northwest](#)
  - *Obed Wild and Scenic River* - Public comment is open through November 1 on a plan to increase overnight camping fees at Rock Creek Campground. Comments can be submitted by mail or email. Source: [Obed Wild and Scenic River](#)
  - *Pullman National Historical Park* - The NPS and Illinois Department of Natural Resources have [opened public comment through October 15](#) on a joint general management plan for Pullman National Historical Park and Pullman State Historic Site. Source: [Pullman National Historical Park](#)
  - *Rock Creek Park* - The NPS, in cooperation with the National Links Trust, has [opened public comment through October 24](#) on a plan to rehabilitate the Rock Creek Park Golf Course. Source: [Rock Creek Park](#)
  - *Theodore Roosevelt National Park* - Public comment is [open through October 25](#) on a Livestock Plan for the park. Source: [KXNET](#)
  - *Yellowstone National Park* - Public comment was extended to remain [open through October 10](#) on a draft Bison Management Plan. Source: [Idaho Capital Sun](#)
  - *Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve* - Public comment is [open through](#)

[November 10](#) on a Kennecott Operations and Management Plan. Source: [Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve](#)

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

- *Okefenokee nominated as World Heritage site* - On September 25, The National Park Service's Office of International Affairs requested that the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge prepare a draft nomination for inclusion on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage List. The site has been on a U.S. "tentative list" for possible world heritage nomination since 1982. Source: [RoughDraft Atlanta](#), [Federal Register](#)
- *Climate security policy meeting* - On September 26, the Department of the Interior, in collaboration with the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate and the National Security Council, co-led an interagency meeting focused on using climate science data to inform policymaking, particularly around the security implications of climate change. 52 representatives from 19 federal agencies attended. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Climate policy updates* - On September 28, the Department of the Interior announced four Department Manual policy updates about climate change, including the need for adaptive management, utilizing climate change as a default in planning and decision-making, reinforcing the need to utilize high-level climate science to inform decisions, and thinking about climate change on a landscape level. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$328 million for drought and climate resiliency* - On September 28, the Department of the Interior announced \$328 million in funding to support communities with water recycling, water storage, and desalination projects. The funds come from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *DOI and Tribal agreement to restore salmon* - On September 21, the Department of the Interior announced it had reached a historic agreement with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, and the Spokane Tribe of Indians to pilot test and reintroduce salmon in blocked habitats of the Upper Columbia River Basin. The agreement includes \$200 million over 20 years from the Bonneville Power Administration, which is housed under the Department of Energy, as well as \$8 million in Bureau of Reclamation funds over the next two years. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *2024-2029 offshore leases* - On September 29, the Department of the Interior released a plan for oil and gas lease sales from 2024-2029. There will only be three leases, all in the Gulf of Mexico. Interest in offshore drilling offshore of Alaska has tapered dramatically, with no serious bids on open leases in recent years. Source:

### [Anchorage Daily News](#)

- *Greater Yellowstone mine claims purchased by conservation group* - On September 25, the Greater Yellowstone Coalition purchased 1,368 acres of mineral rights, leases, and claims on Bureau of Land Management lands just north of Yellowstone National Park for \$6.25 million. The BLM will extinguish the claims and the GYC intends to sell its holdings to the Custer Gallatin National Forest "in a couple of years." Mining on public lands adjacent to the park was banned in 2019, and these leases were among the last acquired before that ban went into effect. Source: [Billings Gazette](#)
- *Oral history program for Indian boarding schools* - On September 26, the Department of the Interior announced that it is launching an oral history project to document the experiences of individuals who attended federal boarding schools for Native children. Source: [KAAL](#)
- *Illegal grazing by Bundy continues* - *The New York Times* published [an article](#) about the continued illegal grazing of Gold Butte National Monument by rancher Cliven Bundy. Cliven is famous for inciting an 2014 armed gathering at Bunkerville (NV) that outnumbered Bureau of Land Management officials, and has inspired ongoing militia movements to flaunt federal control. Source: *The New York Times*

### **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**

**September 20** – Senate agreed to S. Res. 353, expressing support for the designation of the week of September 16 through September 23, 2023, as "National Estuaries Week."

**September 21** – The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources ordered favorably reported several bills, including the following of the interest to the National Park Service:

- S. 384, to establish the Springfield 1908 Race Riot National Monument in the state of Illinois.
- S. 432, to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate the Nulhegan River and Paul Stream in the state of Vermont for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.
- S. 507, to establish the Ralph David Abernathy, Sr., National Historic Site in the state of Georgia.
- S. 608, to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of the Deerfield River in the states of Massachusetts and

- Vermont for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.
- S. 924, to amend the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Development Act to extend the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park Commission.
  - S. 961, to redesignate the Salem Maritime National Historic Site in Salem, Massachusetts, as the "Salem Maritime National Historical Park."
  - S. 1059, to adjust the boundary of Big Bend National Park in the state of Texas.
  - S. 1097, to establish the Cesar E. Chavez and the Farmworker Movement National Historical Park in the states of California and Arizona, with an amendment.
  - S. 1277, to modify the boundary of the Mammoth Cave National Park in the state of Kentucky.
  - S. 1405, to provide for the exchange of certain federal land and state land in the state of Utah.
  - S. 2018, to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct an assessment to identify locations in national parks in which there is the greatest need for broadband internet access service and areas in national parks in which there is the greatest need for cellular service, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute.

**September 30** – The Senate passed H.R. 5860, making continuing appropriations for Fiscal Year 2024, by the order of the Senate of Saturday, September 30, 2023, by a vote of 88 yeas to 9 nays. The bill provides continued funding for all federal agencies, including the National Park Service, through November 17, 2023. The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law.

## **Incidents**

*Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.*

### **Blue Ridge Parkway**

#### **Fall fatality**

On September 23, a 61-year-old fell 150 feet at the Glassmine Falls Overlook. First responders from Reems Creek Fire Department utilized technical rope skills to reach the individual. The individual passed away from their injuries. Source: [News 5 Cleveland](#)

### **Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Fort Raleigh National Historic Site, Moores Creek National Battlefield, Wright Brothers National Memorial**

#### **Hurricane/Tropical Storm Ophelia**

Due to hazardous conditions predicted from the impact of Hurricane/Tropical Storm Ophelia, several parks closed on September 22 and 23. Cape Hatteras, Fort Raleigh, and Wright Brothers reopened on September 24, except for Cape Point Campground, which opened several days later after flooding was abated. Moores Creek reopened on September 25. Source: Cape Hatteras National Seashore ([9/22](#), [9/23](#)), Moores Creek National Battlefield ([9/23](#), [9/25](#))

## **Cape Lookout National Seashore**

### **Boat rescue**

On September 22, the passengers of a 38-foot catamaran requested emergency assistance while anchored within Lookout Bight due to deteriorating weather conditions caused by Tropical Storm Ophelia, including 10-foot swells and winds over 40 miles per hour. There were five passengers, including three children under age 10. A Coast Guard boat was able to navigate through treacherous conditions, utilizing parachute flares to illuminate the way. They transferred the five passengers successfully to the rescue craft. A Coast Guard helicopter crew arrived on scene and provided an overhead light for the transit back to the station. The catamaran was left anchored, to be assessed by local salvage crews after the storm passed. Source: [The Virginian-Pilot](#)

## **Glacier National Park**

### **Hikers stranded**

On September 17, a group of nine hikers called 911 to report they were stuck on Dragon's Tail, a ridge near Reynolds Mountain that overlooks Hidden Lake. The weather was cold and windy and the hikers were unprepared for the weather or to travel in the dark. Two Bear Air dispatched a rescue helicopter, which was able to land near the party and execute multiple trips to extract the nine hikers to Logan Pass. Source: [Daily Inter Lake](#)

## **Grand Canyon National Park**

### **Backpacker rescue**

On September 15, a 63-year-old slipped while backpacking in the Kanab Creek area, resulting in the dislocation of their shoulder. The individual was part of a party of five; one other individual was with them at the time of the incident, while the other three had gone back to their campsite. The hiker who was with the injured individual hiked five miles to reach the rest of the group who had a satellite device that they used to alert emergency services. A helicopter was able to land about a quarter of a mile from the individual and evacuate them from the canyon. They were transported to a Flagstaff hospital. Source: [AZ Central](#)

## **Olympic National Park**

### **Wave causes hiker fatality**

On September 25, three individuals were hiking along Rialto Beach when a wave "overpowered" the group. One individual disappeared from sight. Emergency services were contacted, and a search ensued, involving the NPS, Coast Guard, La Push Tribal Police Department, Quileute Fish and Wildlife, Forks Emergency Services, and Clallam County Sheriff's Office. A ground team found the individual deceased on land later that day. Due to "extremely dangerous weather conditions," recovery of the individual's body was delayed until September 27. The incident is under investigation by the NPS. Source: [Olympic National Park](#)



## **Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument**

### **Increased migration**

The park has seen an increase in the number of migrants and smugglers attempting to cross the U.S.-Mexico border within the park boundaries. U.S. Border Patrol has increased its presence in the park. Source: [FOX5](#)

## **Point Reyes National Seashore**

### **Missing swimmer**

On October 1, an individual was reported missing while swimming at Wildcat Beach. A search by land, water, and air has been conducted by the NPS, U.S. Coast Guard, Marin County (CA) Sheriff's Office, Marin County Fire Department, Stinson Beach Volunteer Fire Department, Contra Costa County, Alameda County Sheriff's Department, California Highway Patrol, and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration. As of October 3, the individual had not yet been found. *[Editor note: Several media reports have stated the incident may have been a shark attack; an NPS report stated that "a shark was seen but an attack has yet to be confirmed."]* Source: Point Reyes National Seashore ([10/2](#), [10/3](#)), [ABC7](#)

## **Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau National Historical Park**

### **Stolen federal equipment**

On September 22, an individual entered the park and stole several valuable pieces of equipment from offices and storage areas, including batteries, chargers, and a number of motorized tools. The individual was recorded by a security camera, and the park is looking for any information the public can provide about the individual or incident. Source: [Big Island Now](#)

## **Rocky Mountain National Park**

### **Missing trail runner**

On September 28, a 49-year-old individual was reported overdue from a 28-mile run/hike that included both on-trail and off-trail travel near the East Inlet Trailhead. The individual started their itinerary on September 27 and was last heard from around noon that day. As of October 2, the search for the individual was ongoing, including ground and air crews from the NPS, Larimer County Search and Rescue, Grand County Search and Rescue, Rocky Mountain Rescue Group, Colorado Search and Rescue Association, the State of Colorado Department of Fire Prevention and Control's Multi-Mission Aircraft, Northern Colorado Interagency Helitack, and Trans Aero. The NPS is looking for any information the public can provide. Source: Rocky Mountain National Park ([9/29](#), [10/1](#), [10/2](#))

## **Virgin Islands National Park**

### **Vessel grounding**

On July 17, 2023, a sailing vessel ran aground at Johnsons Reef, about a half-mile from the northern shore of St. John. Some Elkhorn coral, a species with special protections under the Endangered Species Act, was damaged in the event. High seas from Hurricane Lee and Hurricane Franklin broke apart the vessel on August 26, before salvage companies were able to retrieve the vessel. NPS commercial divers removed the majority of the hull in early September, and are now in the process of removing additional debris from the more shallow areas. The NPS is also developing a contract to salvage the heavy keel and engine block. Personnel from the NPS, University of Virgin Islands, and Coral World Ocean and Reef Initiative were able to relocate coral. Source: [Virgin Islands National Park](#)

### **Wildfires**

- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - On September 26, a wildfire started near Backcountry Campsite 87 at Fontana Lake. By September 28, the fire was completely contained at about 10 acres. The cause of the fire is still under investigation. Source: [WBIR](#)
- *Olympic National Park* - The following seven fires were all caused by lightning strikes the afternoon of August 28. Heavy precipitation and cooler temperatures fell across the park the week of September 25, reducing fire activity. As of October 2, the fires were as follows:
  - Hurricane Fire: 4 acres
  - Eagle Point Fire: 123 acres
  - Diamond Mountain Fire: 30 acres
  - Low Divide Fire: 340 acres
  - Delabarre Fire: 4,165 acres
  - Martins Lake Fire: 122 acres
  - Mount Queets Fire: 7 acres
  - There are various closures to trails across the park.
  - Source: [Olympic National Park](#)
- *Redwood National and State Parks* - On August 15, a thunderstorm started at least 27 fires across the Six Rivers National Forest and Redwood National and State Parks. Three of those fires occurred in the southern part of the park. Two of the fires, the Glen and Devil Fires, were contained immediately, due to quick response and a sprinkler system tactic. As of October 4, the Six Rivers Forest Lightning Complex and Redwood Lightning Complex comprised 49,437 acres and were 56% contained, with 420 personnel assigned. Source: [Redwood National and State Parks, Inciweb](#)
- *Ross Lake National Recreation Area* - On July 29, the Sourdough Fire was detected. It was started by a lightning strike near Diablo, Washington. As of September 28, the fire was 6,369 acres and 25% contained. Much of the greater area around

Sourdough Camp [is closed](#). After a long period of closure, on August 30, State Route 20 reopened to through traffic. Source: North Cascades National Park (7/29 - [first report](#), [second report](#), [7/30](#), [7/31](#), [8/30](#), [9/15](#)), [Inciweb](#), [Idaho Statesman](#)

- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - On August 15, the Redwood Fire was discovered, burning near Redwood Meadow. It was ignited by lightning in one of many storms in August. As of September 30, it was 1,957 acres. The Redwood Meadow Ranger Station has been wrapped with structure protection wrap and several trails in the area have been closed. Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#), [Inciweb](#)

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

- *Olympic National Park* - On October 16, a contractor, American Abatement and Demo, will begin the demolition and removal of the remaining debris from the Hurricane Ridge Day Lodge, which was destroyed by a fire on May 7 (see [5/10/23 Coalition Report](#)). The area will be closed temporarily during the work, which is expected to run through November. The park plans to install temporary facilities to allow for winter operations this year. Source: [Olympic National Park](#)
- *Petersburg National Battlefield* - On September 26, the park reopened the Tour Road in the Eastern Front Unit after finishing emergency repairs on a sinkhole between Stops 3 and 4 (see [9/6/23 Coalition Report](#)). A larger repair and paving project will take place in 2024. Source: [Petersburg National Battlefield](#)

### **Acknowledgments**

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- Editor: Katie Wallace
- Tech and Production Support: Theresa Manthripragada, Steve Pittleman, Emily Thompson
- Regular Correspondent: Don Hellmann, Chris Soller
- Issue Contributors: Robert Binnewies, Jimmy Groton, William Loftus, Mike Murray

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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**An Addition to The Coalition Report**  
**Wednesday, October 4, 2023**

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**Editor note:** *Due to a combination of software error and user error, we neglected to include the House Actions section of the Coalition Report this morning. They are listed below. Please see the original Report for Senate Actions. Thanks, as always, to Don Hellman and Chris Soller, for their efforts to bring us detailed Congressional reporting.*

### **House Actions**

**September 19** - Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing on several bills, including the following of interest to the NPS:

- R. 3107, to direct the Secretary of the Interior to establish the federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation. The National Park Service would have a representative on this council.
- R. 3200, to require the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to carry out certain activities to enhance recreational opportunities for gateway communities, to amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to provide for the establishment of a digital National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass, and for other purposes.
- R. 4984, to amend the District of Columbia Stadium Act of 1957 to provide for the transfer of administrative jurisdiction over the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus to the Administrator of General Services and the leasing of the Campus to the District of Columbia for purposes which include commercial and residential development, and for other purposes. The land is currently under the administrative jurisdiction of the National Park Service.

Testimony was heard from U.S. Representatives Pete Stauber and Joe Neguse; Mike Reynolds, Deputy Director, Congressional and External Relations, National Park Service, Department of the Interior; Jacqueline Emanuel, Associate Deputy Chief, National Forest System, U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture; Cory Smith, Commissioner, District 1, Itasca County, Minnesota; Randy Brodehl, Commissioner, Flathead County, Kalispell, Montana; Delano Hunter, Acting Director, Department of General Services, Washington D.C.; and a public witness.

**September 20** – Committee on the Budget held a markup on legislation on the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2024. Legislation on the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2024 was ordered reported, without amendment.

**September 20** – The Committee on Natural Resources held a markup on several bills including the following of interest to the National Park Service:

- R. 1786, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress a report on the Warrior Training Advancement Course, to direct the Secretary of the Interior to administer a pilot program to employ veterans in positions that relate to conservation and resource management activities of the Department of the Interior, and for other purposes.
- R. 3448, to amend chapter 3081 of title 54, United States Code, to enhance the

protection and preservation of America's battlefields.

H.R. 3448 was ordered reported, as amended. H.R. 1786 was ordered reported, without amendment.

**September 20** – The Committee on Oversight and Accountability held a markup on several bills, including the following of interest to the National Park Service:

- R. 4984, to amend the District of Columbia Stadium Act of 1957 to provide for the transfer of administrative jurisdiction over the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus to the Administrator of General Services and the leasing of the Campus to the District of Columbia for purposes which include commercial and residential development, and for other purposes. The land is currently under the administrative jurisdiction of the National Park Service.

H.R. 4984, was ordered reported, as amended.

**September 29** – The House failed to pass H.R. 5525, making continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2024, by a yea-and-nay vote of 198 yeas to 232 nays.

**September 30** – The House agreed to suspend the rules and pass the following measure: H.R. 5680, amended, making continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2024, by a 2/3 yea-and-nay vote of 335 yeas to 91 nays. The bill provides continued funding for all federal agencies, including the National Park Service, through November 17, 2023.

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