

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



## **The Coalition Report Wednesday, September 20, 2023**

---

### **Coalition Actions**

On Thursday, September 21, at 1 p.m. ET, the Coalition will host a webinar: Government Shutdowns and the Impacts for Our Parks and Public Lands. Phil Francis, Cheryl Schreier, and Sheridan Steele will discuss the impacts of shutdowns on parks and the outlook for Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations. The webinar is free, and registration is required:

### **Register for Webinar**

The Coalition submitted [comments](#) to Yellowstone National Park on the draft Environmental Impact Statement for Bison Management. The comment letter acknowledges the progress made in bison science and management and expresses support for Alternatives 2 and 3.

We joined with the Virginia Conservation Network and National Parks Conservation Association in submitting [a letter](#) to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality detailing serious concerns with the proposed Stationary Source Permit to Operate for WestRock Virginia, LLC. Additionally, the letter requests a public hearing on the proposed permit.

The Coalition submitted [a letter](#) in support of the proposed visitor management plan for Yosemite National Park. The letter also offers comments on the proposed plan.

We joined with five organizations in submitting [detailed comments](#) to the Bureau of Land Management - Nevada State Office on their fourth quarter oil and gas competitive lease sale draft Environmental Assessment and draft Finding of No Significant Impact. Among other things, the letter requests deferring the five parcels in the lease sale until the proposed Fluid Mineral Leases and and Leasing Process rule is finalized.

The Coalition submitted [detailed comments](#) to the Bureau of Land Management on its proposed Fluid Mineral Leases and and Leasing Process rule. The comments include support for the intent of the proposed rule and makes numerous recommendations for improving the proposal. Among other things, the comments include the recommendation that the rule address all recommendations made by the Government Accountability Office and that additional public lands around units of the NPS be withdrawn from oil and gas leasing.

### **[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.*

- *Pike trail feasibility study* - On September 14, the NPS transmitted the Pike National Historic Trail Feasibility Study to Congress. The study evaluated a proposed route associated with Lieutenant Zebulon Pike's 1806-1807 expedition. The study found that the historic use of the trail does not rise to the level of national significance to satisfy National Historic Trail criteria, and that a lack of surviving historic resources and compelling interpretive stories limit the trail's suitability. The NPS welcomes further opportunities to interpret the stories of Pike's expedition in other related historic trails. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *First Indian Youth Service Corps grants* - On September 11, the Department of the Interior announced \$3.5 million in its first round of Indian Youth Service Corps grants, for eight projects involving over 20 Tribes and Tribal organizations. At least one of the projects will involve work with a national park unit, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Firefighter union warns of job exodus* - On September 13, the National Federation of Federal Employees said that at least one-third of the federal wildland firefighter force will leave their jobs if Congress fails to extend 2023 pay increases past their current September 30 end date. Other entities, such as CalFire and Pacific Gas and Electric, pay two to three times more than the amount firefighters would make if legislation is not passed. There are currently two bills in Congress that would increase federal firefighter pay. Source: [Government Executive](#)
- *Lawsuit for endangered tortoise* - The National Park Service, along with several other federal agencies and Clark County (NV), was named in a lawsuit by the

Western Watershed Project that claims they have failed to adequately protect the endangered Mojave desert tortoise and 77 other rare species from illegal grazing and other types of development. The species are supposed to receive special protection under the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan, a compromise that allowed the outskirts of Las Vegas to be developed. Source: [Las Vegas Sun](#)

- *Sea level rise at national parks* - *National Parks Traveler* published [an article](#) about the threat of sea level rise on national park units, including Dry Tortugas National Park, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Statue of Liberty National Monument, and Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Source: *National Parks Traveler*
- *AllTrails launches national park guides* - The map app, *AllTrails*, recently launched "National Park Guides" with "insider tips" for planning trips to national parks in nine countries, available to premium subscribers. Source: [Fitt Insider](#)

### **Around the Parks**

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

- *9/11 Memorial Act Grant Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On September 11, the NPS awarded \$4 million in funding from the 9/11 Memorial Act grant program to the National September 11 Memorial and Memorial Plaza in New York City. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Acadia National Park* - The Friends of Acadia purchased a 4-acre parcel for future housing for seasonal park employees. The seller, Seal Harbor Properties, LLC, offered the property at a discounted price to support the effort. The Friends of Acadia also received matching funding from Centennial Challenge funds. After the housing is built, the property will be donated to the park for long-term ownership and management. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *American Battlefield Protection Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On September 7, the NPS announced the award of \$1,850,777 in Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants for two sites in South Carolina. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Apostle Islands National Lakeshore* - On October 2, the park will open the application process for 2024-2025 Commercial Use Authorizations. Applications are due November 30. Source: [Apostle Islands National Lakeshore](#)
- *Biscayne National Park, Dry Tortugas National Park* - On August 13, scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey's St. Petersburg Coastal Marine Science Center erected several dozen temporary shade structures over threatened Elkhorn coral formations in the two parks as a measure of "emergency fieldwork" designed to provide protection during high ocean temperatures. Some corals also had dim lights attached to attract prey for the coral to feed on. The USGS selected individual

corals that "represent unique genetic lines that are thought only to exist in certain national parks." The shade structures will remain in place until temperatures cool this fall. Source: [U.S. Geological Survey](#)

- *Boston National Historical Park* - On September 15, the park will begin a project to restore the Dorchester Heights Monument and Thomas Park. The \$30 million project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. The project is expected to be complete by Spring 2026, in time for the United States' 250th anniversary as a nation. Source: [Boston National Historical Park](#)
- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - The park has opened up bids for a contract to build new employee housing in Buxton, North Carolina. Bids are due by October 2. Source: [Beach 104](#)
- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - Large waves linked to Hurricane Lee, which is currently 500 miles away from North Carolina, have uncovered part of the original 1870 brick fence for the iconic Cape Hatteras Lighthouse. The fence has been under several feet of sand since 1999, when the lighthouse was moved inland to protect it from sea level rise. The fence was last uncovered by wave action in 2020 for one week before being reburied. Source: [The Charlotte Observer](#)
- *Cape Lookout National Seashore* - On September 7, the park announced that they will permanently close the Beaufort Visitor Information Center in December. This is due to the end of the park's ten-year agreement with the town of Beaufort, North Carolina, on January 1, 2024. The agreement has allowed the park to use the visitor center and ferry service without any compensation to the town because of the tourism revenue it generates. The town expressed the need for employee office space and visitor parking; they decided they could no longer offer the space without compensation. The park has no federal funds to pay for the change and expressed disappointment at not being able to reach an agreement. Without the agreement in place, the ferry service to the park may choose another launch location, negotiate with the town independently, or discontinue service. Source: *WITN*
- *Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park* - On September 14, the Tennessee State Building Commission approved a \$260 million project to replace the Moccasin Bend Mental Institute with a new facility, pending an archeological survey done at the site. The building is within the boundary of the Moccasin Bend National Archeological District, which was established in 2003. The park's official park partner, National Park Partners, had asked the commission to reject the plan, arguing that at the district's establishment, the State of Tennessee stated that when funding became available, it would relocate the hospital and allow the area to be preserved. Source: [Chattanooga.com](#), [Chattanooga Times Free Press](#)
- *Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area* - The *Pike County Courier* published

[an article](#) outlining the current status of an effort to re-designate Delaware Water Gap to a national park. The New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club recently rescinded its support for the re-designation, stating that it will instead focus its park support on learning from Indigenous and community voices. Meanwhile, the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Sierra Club supports the re-designation. A variety of other groups are also highlighted in the article, both in support and against the effort. Source: *Pike County Courier*

- *Everglades National Park* - After an absence of 35 years, the Atala butterfly has returned to the park. The overharvesting of coontie roots was responsible for its decline. Coontie, a type of cycad, has become popular for native landscaping in recent years, allowing a breeding population to reestablish itself across southern Florida. Source: [Everglades National Park Facebook page](#)
- *Everglades National Park* - On September 13, the NPS announced a Finding of No Significant Impact for the construction of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Visitor Center and other site improvements at the site of the former Gulf Coast Visitor Center in Everglades City, Florida. The Gulf Coast Visitor Center and nearby infrastructure was destroyed by Hurricane Irma in September 2017. The contract for the project was awarded and is expected to take several years. Some closures will take place during construction. Source: [Everglades National Park](#)
- *Flight 93 National Memorial* - On September 11, the 22nd anniversary of the terrorist attack on Flight 93 (and the World Trade Center), the park unveiled "new enhancements" to the Western Overlook. The Friends of Flight 93 National Memorial supported the project. Source: [The Tribune-Democrat](#)
- *Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie National Historical Park* - The park is retiring three historic flags that have been on display the last 20 years: the Palmetto Guard, United States 33-star garrison, and U.S. 33-star storm flags. The flags will be preserved in a dark, cool, and dry environment to preserve them from degradation. Source: [Count on News 2](#)
- *Gateway National Recreation Area* - New York City has entered into a lease agreement to house asylum seekers at Floyd Bennet Field. The city has characterized the level of asylum seekers as a crisis in need of emergency shelter, while critics have claimed that such measures are an inappropriate use of federal facilities, are inadequate supports for migrants, and have negative ramifications on local communities. Source: [Daily News](#)
- *Gauley River National Recreation Area* - On September 18, the park began a project to plug a well in the Koontz Bend area that was abandoned 20 years ago. The work is expected to take about three weeks. The project is being funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The \$1.27 million contract was awarded to North Wind Site Services of Morgantown, West Virginia, and will also include plugging two

- wells in Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Source: [Charleston Gazette-Mail](#)
- *Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve* - The *Anchorage Daily News* published [an article](#) about the study and monitoring of humpback whales in Icy Strait by park biologists. The article focuses on Whale 219, a female that had not been seen in two years, and recently reappeared. NPS biologist Christine Gabriele is quoted extensively in the article. Source: *Anchorage Daily News*
  - *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - The NPS announced the selection of a new leasee for the restaurant formerly known as the Cliff House, as well as the café inside the Lands End Lookout. The lease was awarded to Sutro Lands End Partners, LLC. The business is expected to make improvements over the coming year and there is no opening date yet. The lease will last up to twenty years. Source: [Golden Gate National Recreation Area](#)
  - *Grand Teton National Park* - The Bureau of Reclamation is planning to drop release flows from the Jackson Lake Dam on the Snake River from 2,300 cubic feet per second to 280 cfs by October 2 to do repair work on some of the dam gates. Source: [Jackson Hole News and Guide](#)
  - *Hopewell Culture National Historical Park* - On September 19, the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks were named to the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) World Heritage List. The Earthworks include five sites managed by the NPS and three sites managed by Ohio History Connection. Source: [Dayton Daily News](#)
  - *Mount Rainier National Park* - *The New York Times* published [an article](#) about climate change effects on Mount Rainier, including receding glaciers, floods, plant migration, and changes to recreational patterns. Source: *The New York Times*
  - *Natchez Trace Parkway* - On September 15, the NPS and Federal Highway Administration celebrated the completion of a 40-mile roadway rehabilitation and safety project on the parkway. The \$54.3 million project was funded by the FHA's Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects program. In 2024, the parkway will begin a project to improve pavement from Milepost 121 to 204. Source: [Natchez Trace Parkway](#)
  - *Harpers Ferry National Historical Park* - On September 12, a project to stabilize a rockslide area along U.S. 340 was begun. During the project, part of the Loudoun Heights Trail, some climbing routes, and a section of river shoreline will remain closed. The project was contracted by the West Virginia Division of Highways. Source: [Harpers Ferry National Historical Park](#)
  - *Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park* - On September 17, at the park's visitor center, the Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro announced

that a new U.S. Naval oiler ship will be named after Harriet Tubman. Harriet is considered to be the first Black woman to serve formally in the U.S. military, working as a Union spy, scout, nurse, and cook during the Civil War. Source: [United States Navy](#)

- *Lyndon B Johnson National Historical Park* - In August, the National Park Trust transferred a 0.47-acre parcel to the park. The property is located adjacent to the park, and includes a historic house, once owned by President Johnson's sister. The National Park Trust purchased the property from President Johnson's niece. Source: [National Park Trust](#)
- *Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument* - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed listing *Quitobaquito tryonia* as an endangered species. It is a freshwater snail that lives only in one spring within the park. Previously, it was found in three springs, but drought, climate change, and water drawdown due to border wall construction have cut its range. Source: [KGUN9](#)
- *Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park* - At the beginning of September, the NPS diverted the Passaic River through the historic hydroelectric plant in order to do an underwater survey at the bottom of Great Falls. The park worked with an underwater archaeological dive team to conduct the three-day survey, which mapped the topography of the river for use in science and emergency rescue calls. The survey team also discovered two firearms. Source: [northjersey.com](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - The U.S. Geological Survey published [an article](#) about collaborative research between their Fort Collins Science Center and Rocky Mountain scientists, focusing on human impacts, such as human waste and garbage, on wilderness trails. The study was [featured recently](#) in the summer edition of *Park Science*. Source: U.S. Geological Survey, *Park Science Magazine* (Summer 2023)
- *San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park* - On September 14, the park installed the third and final topgallant mast to its 1886-era ship, the *Balclutha*. The ship has been without its topgallant masts for nine years, and the park has worked to rig all three over the last two years, with the help of shipwrights, staff, and volunteers. Source: [San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park](#)
- *Save America's Treasures grants* (an NPS-administered program) - On September 12, the NPS, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute for Museum Library Services, announced \$25.7 million in Save America's Treasures grants from the Historic Preservation Fund for 58 projects in 26 states, the Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument* - In August, a home builder, D.R.

Horton, began constructing utilities and roadway crossings for a planned community surrounding the park. The development is part of a 2018 agreement between the NPS and City of Las Vegas that granted the city 5.63 acres in easements in exchange for preventing the development of a multi-lane roadway through the monument. The construction will continue in the area through 2024.

Source: [Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument](#)

- *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - The NPS has issued a Finding of No Significant Impact for a frontcountry infrastructure improvement project, including accessibility improvements, increased access to the cabin district, and new exhibits. Source: [Los Alamos Daily Post](#)
- *Virgin Islands National Park* - On September 15, the Senate of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands approved, by a vote of 9-5, a land swap exchanging an island named Whistling Cay for a site in Estate Catherineberg on St. John, owned by the NPS, as well as \$210,000, so that a new K-12 public school can be built. Source: [The St. Thomas Source](#)
- *Wilson's Creek National Battlefield* - The *Springfield News-Leader* published [an article](#) about the park's efforts to better reach the public, including a \$3.5 million renovation of the park's museum, dropping park entrance fees, adding an audio tour to the NPS app, and telling new stories about Civil War history. Source: *Springfield News-Leader*
- *Yellowstone National Park* - A new study by scientists at Oregon State University has found that increases in bison have a deleterious effect on aspen populations. This study runs counter to the popular theory that the reintroduction of wolves culled the elk population, allowing aspen populations to better thrive. Source: [Casper Star Tribune](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - On September 12, a federal court of appeals held up a prior court decision that dismissed a lawsuit by the Earth Island Institute that claimed the park's efforts to thin trees in the park was akin to "commercial logging." Source: [The Union Democrat](#)
- *Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve* - *National Parks Traveler* published [an article](#) about the preservation of wolves within the park and the complexities to predator management in Alaska. Source: *National Parks Traveler*

## **Personnel Changes**

- *Kaloko-Honokōhau, Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau National Historical Park* - Paul Scolari was selected as the new superintendent for the two parks. Paul has 29 years of NPS experience, most recently as superintendent at Dinosaur National Monument. He starts his new role in late October. Source: [Big Island Now](#)



- *Manhattan Project National Historical Park* - Tom Smith was selected as the first permanent site manager for the park's Los Alamos site. Tom has many years of NPS experience, most recently as education specialist for the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. He started his new role on September 18. Source: [Manhattan Project National Historical Park](#)

## **Park People**

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

### **Deceased**

- John Francis Byrne, 82, passed away on August 31. John worked for the NPS for many years, "working on the Clean Air Act and leaving a lasting impact on iconic parks including Yosemite, the George Washington Memorial Parkway, and the Appalachian Trail." Source: [Legacy/The Washington Post](#)
- James "Screech" William Caniford, 82, passed away on August 22. James worked for the NPS for 34 years, primarily at the Harpers Ferry Interpretive Design Center as an exhibits specialist and as a "Corpsman Leader" with the Job Corps Center. Source: [Spirit of Jefferson](#)
- Melodie Lotz Hardham, 79, passed away on August 28. Melodie was a volunteer for a time at Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Source: [Island Free Press](#)
- Luke Mallon, 40, passed away recently. Luke was previously a law enforcement ranger for a time at Yellowstone National Park. Source: [KREM2](#)
- Shirley Mitchell, 75, passed away on September 4. Shirley worked for a time as a "guide" for George Washington Carver National Monument. Source: [KOAM](#)
- Nancy L. Howell-Streeter, 72, passed away on August 26. Nancy was "one of the first female law enforcement" rangers in the NPS. Her career spanned 20 years. Source: [Spirit of Jefferson](#)
- Betty Boyd Tobin, 94, passed away on September 5. Betty's parents worked in Yellowstone National Park, "running the employee chow hall at Lake," and she bussed tables and helped in the kitchen for a time as a young person. Source: [Legacy/Post Register](#)

### **Retired**

- Tom Ulrich will retire at the end of this month, after over 20 years working for the NPS. He retires as the deputy superintendent of Sleeping Bear Dunes National

Lakeshore. Source: [The Ticker](#)

## **In the News**

- Dale Culver has been selected as the San Luis Valley Field Manager for the Bureau of Land Management Rocky Mountain District. Previously, Dale worked for the NPS for 25 years, most recently as the chief ranger at Great Sand Dunes National Park. Source: [Bureau of Land Management](#)
- Pat Pilcher wrote [an article](#) for *Travel Awaits* about their experience returning to Chaco Culture National Historical Park, where he worked as an archaeological assistant for his first two summers in a 25-year NPS career. Source: *Travel Awaits*

## **Open for Comment**

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

- *Castillo de San Marcos National Monument, Fort Matanzas National Monument* - Public comment is open through October 1 on a proposal to charge a \$1 online reservation fee for after-hours special events. The fee increase will be absorbed into other existing ticket costs, so this will only affect tickets for children five-years-old and younger. Comments may be made by email. Source: [Fort Matanzas National Monument](#)
- *Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park* - Public comment is [open through September 29](#) on a Great Falls (MD) Development Concept Plan. Source: [Chesapeake and Ohio Canal 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 are also possible by mail.*]
- *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](#)
- *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](#)

- *Harpers Ferry National Historical Park* - Public comment is open [through September 22](#) on a plan to remove five structures at the Henkle farmstead. The structures are "in a severe state of disrepair" and their removal will more closely resemble the battlefield cultural landscape of the Battle of Harpers Ferry. Source: [Harpers Ferry National Historical 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](#)
- *Isle Royale National Park* - Public comment is [open through September 26](#) on a draft Wilderness Stewardship Plan. Source: [Isle Royale National Park](#)
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - Public comment is [open through September 25](#) on a Tomales Point Area Plan, including management of the tule elk herd. Source: [Point Reyes National Seashore](#)
- *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](#)
- *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](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - Public comment is open [through September 25](#) on a bison management plan. Source: [Buckrail](#)

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

- *DOI cancels Arctic NWR oil leases, limits reserve leases* - On September 6, the Department of the Interior announced that it will cancel the last remaining oil leases in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The leases were purchased by the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority, a state agency, in 2021. The DOI asserts that the 2021 lease sale violated federal law and they will soon release a draft supplemental environmental statement analyzing the potential impacts of oil drilling. The AIDEA has stated the cancellation of its leases is illegal, and they will follow up with litigation. The DOI also announced it is proposing a rule to limit oil and gas leasing on half of the National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska. Source: [Anchorage Daily News](#)
- *\$5 million for bison* - On September 7, the Department of the Interior announced \$5 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act funding to

support the restoration of bison populations and grassland ecosystems in Tribal communities. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

- *Working group calls for mining reform* - On September 12, the Interior-led Interagency Working Group on Mining Laws, Regulations, and Permitting released a report that made more than 60 recommendations to modernized the rock mining permitting and development process in order to speed domestic production of renewable energy. Source: [The Hill](#)
- *Water recycling program* - On September 7, the Department of the Interior launched a new large-scale water recycling program. The new program has \$180 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding and will incentivize water recycling and reuse projects, with no cap on project size. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Chinese pangolin trade violates CITES* - On September 8, the Department of the Interior notified U.S. Congress under the Pelly Amendment to the Fishermen's Protective Act of 1967 that citizens of China are engaging in the trade or take of pangolins, which violates the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Within 60 days of certification, the President will notify Congress of any actions. 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.*

Between September 5 and 14, the Senate and House of Representatives were in session, but no business was conducted relating to the National Park Service.

### **Incidents**

*Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.*

**Acadia National Park, Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park, Cape Cod National Seashore, Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, Minute Man National Historical Park, New Bedford Whaling National Historical Site, Roger Williams National Memorial, Salem Maritime National Historic Site**  
**Hurricane Lee closures**

Many park units across the northeastern seaboard (see above) preemptively closed locations in advance of Hurricane Lee. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)

**Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park**  
**Climber fall**

On September 11, a rock climber took a fall on the Great White Wall climbing route on the North Rim of Black Canyon and went unconscious. Search and Rescue teams from the park and Western Colorado University responded, first hiking the Long Draw route into the canyon, rock climbing 300 feet to the patient's location, and then lowering them to the bottom of the canyon. The patient was then flown by a Colorado Army National Guard helicopter from the bottom of the canyon to Montrose, Colorado, where they were transferred to a medical air ambulance and flown to Saint Mary's hospital in Grand Junction, Colorado. The individual sustained "major trauma injuries." Source: [Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park](#)

## **Cape Hatteras National Seashore**

### **Boat grounding**

On September 6, a 42-foot boat grounded on the beach about one mile north of Oregon Inlet. There were no reported injuries to the three people on board. The NPS worked with the U.S. Coast Guard and the owner to remove the boat from the beach later that day.

Source: [Cape Hatteras National Seashore](#), [WITN](#)

## **Fire Island National Seashore**

### **West Nile Virus**

On August 31, park biologists found a dead crow at Blue Point Beach. They collected it and sent it to a lab for testing. Results showed that the crow tested positive for West Nile Virus. The park regularly tests mosquitoes for the virus and will increase surveillance at several sites in the park. No mosquitoes have been found to carry the virus yet. Positive tests may necessitate the need for vector control actions, which the park will announce 24 hours in advance. Source: [Fire Island National Seashore](#)

## **Grand Canyon National Park**

### **Hiker fatality**

On September 9, a 55-year-old attempted to hike from the South Rim to the North Rim. At about 2 p.m., a mile south of Cottonwood Campground on the North Kaibab Trail, the hiker became unresponsive. Bystanders began CPR and park staff deployed a rescue helicopter to access the location and administer advanced life support measures.

Attempts at resuscitation were unsuccessful. The NPS and the Coconino County (AZ) Medical Examiner are investigating the death. Source: [Los Angeles Times](#), [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

## **Katmai National Park and Preserve**

### **Hiker saved by webcam viewers**

On September 7, a hiker appeared on a webcam on Dumpling Mountain that broadcasts live on [Explore.org](#). Viewers watched the hiker appear to say "lost" and "help me" (the

feed has no audio), and the hiker also gave a thumbs down. Viewers were able to notify the staff of *Explore.org*, who reached NPS staff. A park Search and Rescue team was able to reach the hiker, who was "caught in windy and rainy conditions with poor visibility." The hiker was unharmed and escorted back to safety. Source: [BBC](#)

### **Mammoth Cave National Park**

#### **Shots at "Bigfoot"**

At around 1 a.m. on September 10, an individual with a child approached a tent with two occupants in a backcountry campsite, saying that their own campsite had been destroyed and they "kept hearing strange sounds." The individual said that they were going to investigate because they were in "Bigfoot Country," and the individual showed the other party a firearm. Five to ten minutes later, the party of two in the tent heard "at least one gunshot." The individual with the child returned to the tent and said Bigfoot had emerged and approached them, and they had fired in defense. The two in the tent decided to pack up and leave the area. The incident is under investigation by the NPS. Source: [WRBL](#)

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

#### **Rafting fatalities**

The week of September 4, two rafters died while rafting the Gauley River. One individual's body was recovered quickly, but high water delayed the recovery of the other. On September 19, the NPS announced that they had recovered a body from the river, but could not yet confirm whether it was the other individual from this incident. Source: [WVVA](#), [WTRF](#)

### **Point Reyes National Seashore**

#### **FOIA lawsuit**

On August 31, a journalist sued the National Park Service, claiming they have violated the Freedom of Information Act by refusing to disclose public records related to the management of dairy and beef ranching leases in the park. In December 2020, the journalist wrote an article called "Apocalypse Cow: The Future of Life at Point Reyes National Park," which caused enough public scrutiny that the NPS published a page to its official website with responses to the accusations in the article. Source: [Pacific Sun](#)

### **Saguaro National Park**

#### **Employee bucked off mule**

On September 12, a park employee was injured after being bucked off a mule at Manning Camp while delivering equipment and supplies. The individual was airlifted out of Manning Camp by a Pima County (AZ) Sheriff's Department helicopter. Further details about the patient's condition were not available. Source: [KVOA](#)

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

### **Missing backpacker found**

On September 13, a 65-year-old participating in a multi-day backpacking trip with seven others went for a day hike in the Ranger Lake area and failed to return. After 48 hours, a ranger located the individual in the Rowell Meadow area. The individual was in good health and assisted to the Rowell Meadow Trailhead, where they were then driven to their car. Source: [Fresno Bee](#), [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park Facebook page](#)

### **Steamtown National Historic Site**

#### **Theft of government property**

On September 14, a Ford F-350 utility truck and NPS uniforms were stolen from the park. Scranton (NJ) Police are investigating the incident and looking for any information the public can provide. Source: [WNEP](#)

### **Yellowstone National Park**

#### **Cement truck rollover**

On August 28, a cement truck rolled off the road and onto a minivan near Tower Junction. The five people inside the minivan were extricated and moved to safety. Due to the hardened cement inside the drum, crews were unable to remove the truck entirely from the scene until September 11, when a specialized crew was able to assist with its removal. During the removal, the road between Tower Junction and Mammoth Hot Springs was closed for several hours. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

### **Yosemite National Park**

#### **Rock fracture**

On August 20, a rock climbing guide scaled a route on the Royal Arches and observed a 200-foot-long crack, about an inch wide, that had not been present on a climb two weeks earlier. A climbing ranger and geologist went out to investigate and found it to be actively cracking with smaller rocks "rattling" down through the crack. The park proactively closed a number of rock climbing routes on the wall, as well as a quarter-mile of the Yosemite Valley Loop Trail adjacent to the Ahwahnee Hotel. There is a trail detour in place. Source: [Los Angeles Times](#)

### **Wildfires**

- *Olympic National Park* -
  - On August 28, a lightning strike started the Hurricane Fire, burning in the Hurricane Ridge area. As of September 17, the fire was about 4 acres. The Hurricane Ridge Road closed for several days and reopened on September 2.
  - A separate strike the same day started the Eagle Point Fire in the Obstruction Point Area. As of September 17, it was about 123 acres in size. The

Obstruction Point Road and trailhead closed for several days and reopened on September 2. After large growth on September 2, the Obstruction Point Road closed again to all traffic.

- On September 1, three other fires were located in the park from a reconnaissance flight: Diamond Mountain Fire (30 acres, 3 miles northeast of Anderson Pass), Low Divide Fire (274 acres, in the North Fork of the Quinault drainage), and Delabarre Fire (1,500 acres, 3 miles southeast of Mount Christie).
  - On September 2, a fire near Martins Lake was spotted by a reconnaissance flight. As of September 17, it was estimated at 93 acres.
  - On September 14, the Mount Queets Fire was detected, near the summit of the mountain. As of September 17, it was estimated at 4 acres.
  - There are various closures to trails across the park.
  - Source: Olympic National Park ([8/30](#), [9/1](#), [9/2](#), [9/5](#), [9/17](#))
- *Pinnacles National Park* - A series of lightning strikes hit the region around the park on September 9, causing a wildfire near the High Peaks. The park was closed for emergency response. The same day, the park was able to contain the fire and reopen the park. Source: [BenitoLink](#)
  - *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 September 18, the Six Rivers Forest Lightning Complex and Redwood Lightning Complex comprised 27,394 acres and were 7% contained, with 1,122 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 15, 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 fire in one of many storms in August. As of September 17, it was 1,158 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](#)
  - *Shenandoah National Park* - On September 8, the Millers Head Fire started. Initial reports indicate the fire was "naturally caused." As of September 17, the fire was



100% contained at 2.5 acres. Source: [FOX5](#), [WZRV](#)

- *Yosemite National Park* - On September 9, a storm brought several new lightning-caused fires to wilderness areas of the park. As of September 10, the following fires were active: Jan Fire (located between Hoover Lakes, 0.5 acres), Marmot Fire (near Moraine Meadow, 0.01 acres), Chiquito Fire (north of Chiquito Pass, 2 acres). As of September 10, there were no closures associated with these fires. Source: [Yosemite National Park](#)

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

- *Death Valley National Park* - On September 13, the park announced that they tentatively plan to reopen CA-190 from the western end, as well as Panamint Springs, Stovepipe Wells, the Oasis, and "some" hiking trailheads and campgrounds. Most secondary roads and all eastern entrances will remain closed, and traffic control will be in place on CA-190 for continued repair work. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - On September 11, the park reopened the Rich Mountain Road. It had been closed for a month due to incidents related to black bear activity (see [8/9/23 Coalition Report](#)). Source: [The Mountain Press](#)
- *Petersburg National Battlefield* - On September 19, the park began repair work on the sinkhole that opened up on Eastern Front Tour Road in early September (see [9/6/23 Coalition Report](#)). The work is expected to take about a week. Source: [The Progress-Index](#)
- *Wrangell-St Elias National Park and Preserve* - The NPS, in collaboration with Alaska State Troopers and the National Transportation Safety Board, have called off recovery efforts for the airplane that crashed on August 27 on Mt. Leeper (see [9/6/23 Coalition Report](#)). A reconnaissance mission on September 5 showed that the plane came to rest in a "highly crevassed area" on the Yahtse Glacier that continually accumulates snow, making the wreckage "permanently inaccessible." A preliminary report about the incident was released by the NTSB on September 13. Source: [Wrangell-St Elias National Park and Preserve](#)

### **Acknowledgments**

This newsletter is supported through Coalition staff and invaluable volunteers:

- Editor: Katie Wallace
- Tech and Production Support: Theresa Manthripragada, Steve Pittleman, Emily Thompson
- Regular Correspondent: Don Hellmann, Chris Soller

- Issue Contributors: Steve Hastings, Bill Walters

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

\* \* \* \* \*

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

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

--- ### ---