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The Coalition Report

Wednesday, September 6, 2023

Coalition Actions

The Coalition joined with more than 40 organizations in submitting [comments](#) through the Southern Environmental Law Center to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service on their proposed revisions to the Endangered Species Act. The regulations respond to the rollback from 2019 revisions. The comments recommend key revisions to further the goals of conserving biodiversity and addressing climate change.

We joined with ten organizations in a [letter](#) to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service supporting the National Wildlife Refuge System's hunting and sport fishing regulations. The regulations would phase out the use of lead ammunition by 2026. Additionally, the letter recommends accelerating the phaseout to an 18-month period.

The Coalition and six partner groups submitted a [letter](#) to the Department of the Interior expressing concerns with the Army Corps of Engineers managed environmental review of Dominion Energy's transmission line across the James River near Jamestown, Virginia. The group also [requested a meeting](#) to discuss these concerns.

We joined with the Sierra Club and the National Parks Conservation Association in submitting detailed [comments](#) to the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality on the pre-hearing draft regional haze state implementation plan.

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.

- *"My Park Story" podcast* - The National Park Service has premiered a new podcast called "My Park Story." It is focused on stories of individuals with unique connections to the NPS, in parks and in their communities. The first episode interviews Matt Turner, the NPS social media lead, whose witty posts are known to go viral often. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *First-ever NPS recruitment team* - In Spring 2024, the NPS will launch its first-ever National Recruitment Team to focus on hiring diverse candidates for its "most in-demand jobs." The group will host resume-building workshops, career fairs, virtual recruiting events, social media marketing, and community networking, including efforts with historically Black colleges, military installations, trade schools, and universities with connections to Native groups. Source: [Federal Times](#)
- *Pay raise for federal workers* - On August 31, President Biden formalized a plan to raise pay for civilian federal employees by an average of 5.2%, starting in January 2024. The [declaration](#) was made under Title 5 of U.S. Code, which allows the President to raise pay because of "national emergency or serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare." Source: [Government Executive](#), The White House
- *Travel pay for federal teleworkers* - On August 21, the Office of Personnel Management issued new guidance for federal employees who work remotely to understand when they're eligible for paid travel time to work sites. Source: [Government Executive](#)
- *Trail apps cause problems* - The *Denver Post* published [an article](#) about an increase in rescues and trespassing due to trail apps such as *AllTrails* and *Gaia GPS*. Several government agencies, including the NPS, U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management, have been working with apps regularly to identify solutions. Source: *Denver Post*
- *"Race to replace derogatory place names"* - *Grist*, in partnership with The Wilderness Society, published [an article](#) about efforts to replace derogatory place names on federal lands. Havasupai Gardens, the newly revised name of a backcountry location in Grand Canyon National Park, is mentioned in the article. Source: *Grist*
- *Traveling the national parks by bicycle* - The *Missoulian* published [an article](#) about an individual attempting to bicycle tour to all 51 national-parks-in-name in the lower 48 states. The individual is trying to raise awareness about climate change by trying to see the parks before they dramatically change in the coming years. The article also highlights the lack of adequate bicycle infrastructure among the parks. Source: *Missoulian*

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Big Bend National Park* - Keep Big Bend Wild received the NPS Excellence in Wilderness Stewardship Award in the external partner category for their coalition-building efforts to support wilderness designation in the park. Source: [Big Bend National Park](#)
- *Big Cypress National Preserve* - *Gulfshore Business* published [an article](#) about the history of oil drilling in Big Cypress, as well as the efforts to end drilling all together. One such effort is that of a group called WildLandscapes International that is trying to purchase the mineral rights across the preserve and the Florida National Wildlife Refuge, then later sell them to the federal government in installments. The group is in the process of getting an accurate estimate of the worth of the mineral deposits. Source: *Gulfshore Business*
- *Biscayne National Park* - The Biscayne Beach Cleanup volunteer program won the George and Helen Hartzog Innovation Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service. The program recruited 275 volunteers to collect over 30,000 pounds of marine debris to protect turtle nesting sites. Source: [Biscayne National Park](#)
- *Christiansted National Historic Site* - On August 28, the park began a project to repair the historic Bandstand, including paint, new railings, and upgrades to electrical outlets. The project is being completed in partnership with the Historic Preservation Training Center. It is expected to be complete September 15. Source: [Christiansted National Historic Site](#)
- *Cuyahoga Valley National Park* - A group of high school students and a teacher from Archbishop Hoban High School Center for Sustainability in Akron, Ohio, received the 2022 George and Helen Hartzog Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service in the impact award team category. The group supported the park every month during the 2021-22 school year, including planting native trees, data collection, and student research projects that supported trail accessibility, water recreation and safety, mental health, and providing resources for non-native English speakers. Source: [Cuyahoga Valley National Park](#)
- *Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley National Monument* - On August 28, the 68th anniversary of the kidnapping and murder of Emmett Till, the NPS dedicated Graball Landing as part of the new national monument. The site memorializes the location where Emmett's body was recovered. Source: [National Parks Conservation Association](#)
- *Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley National Monument* - *E&E News* published [an article](#) about the creation of the monument, including the difficult decisions

- sometimes made about what to preserve during monument designation and the challenges to launching and staffing a new monument. Source: *E&E News*
- *Fire Island National Seashore* - On August 30, the park reopened the Lighthouse Tower after completing a project to stabilize the outer façade. Source: [Fire Island National Seashore](#)
 - *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - The *Los Angeles Times* published [an article](#) about efforts to drain Lake Powell in favor of keeping Lake Mead full. Source: *Los Angeles Times*
 - *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Rainbow Bridge National Monument* - The National Park Service and the Federal Aviation Administration have finalized an air tour voluntary agreement in lieu of an air tour management plan for the two national park units. Any commercial operators intending to conduct business in the two units will sign this agreement, which outlines stipulations for resource protection. Source: [Arizona Public Radio](#), [National Park Service Planning, Environment, and Public Comment](#)
 - *Grand Teton National Park* - The NPS, in collaboration with the Grand Teton National Park Foundation, recently started a project to preserve and rehabilitate buildings at the historic Roy Chambers Homestead in the Mormon Row Historic District to convert them into employee housing. The project will continue into 2024. Mormon Row Road is closed from north of Ditch Creek to south of the Roy Chambers site through October. Source: [Buckrail](#)
 - *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - The park's education team has received the NPS Excellence in Education Award for their "Earth, Sea, Sky" program, which links local students to three partnered learning destinations: 'Imiloa Astronomy Center, Mokupāpapa Discovery Center, and Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. The program is modeled on the Kumulipo Hawaiian creation chant and was co-created by the three partners. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)
 - *Ice Age National Scenic Trail* - The NPS approved a Corridor Plan and Environmental Assessment for the Ice Age National Scenic Trail in Rock County, Wisconsin. Source: [Ice Age National Scenic Trail](#)
 - *Joshua Tree National Park* - Four park staff received the Freeman Tilden Award for their creation of the exhibit, "Universal Threads," a pathway to learn about earth, sky, plants, animals, and people. The exhibit was designed in collaboration with the park's 15 associated Tribes. The park's new superintendent (and previous program manager of science and resource stewardship), Jane Rodgers, received the Excellence in Wilderness Stewardship Award for her work training and deploying wilderness resource advisors during wildfires and efforts to discourage, monitor, and remediate illegal OHV trespass. Source: [Joshua Tree National Park](#)

- *Joshua Tree National Park* - On September 1, the park announced the launch of [a new virtual exhibit](#) called "People of the Desert." The exhibit was developed by staff from the park and the National Park Service Museum Management Program, and features over 200 objects, archival items, and historic photographs from the park's museum collection. Source: [Joshua Tree National Park](#)
- *Joshua Tree National Park, Mojave National Preserve - Steamboat Pilot and Today* published [an article](#) about the threat of global climate change on Joshua trees and the efforts to conserve them, including through "assisted migration" upslope. Both parks are mentioned in the article, as well as efforts by the NPS and the Urban Conservation Corps to collect seeds. Source: *Steamboat Pilot and Today*
- *Minute Man National Historical Park* - The park will soon begin a project to replace the boardwalk near Elm Brook Hill. Funding for the project comes from the Great American Outdoors Act. The project is expected to be complete in early November. Temporary closures are expected. Source: [Minute Man National Historical Park](#)
- *Natchez Trace Parkway - NewsBreak* published [an article](#) about the "spooky" history of the parkway, including anecdotes about the "very first documented serial killers in America," a rumor of buried treasure, the namesake of Witch Dance, and the mysterious death of Meriwether Lewis. Source: *NewsBreak*
- *National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act* (an NPS-administered program) - On July 9, it was announced that a non-profit, the Watch Hill Lighthouse Keepers Association, had been selected to become the new owners of the Coast Guard's Watch Hill Lighthouse and its surrounding land. Community members expressed concern that public access to the coast would be denied, and the Westerly Town Council (RI) passed a resolution asking for ownership of the land instead of the non-profit. The NPS asked for more information about public access, and a lawyer for the non-profit said that there is no express access easement of record to the property, only a private road, so they cannot commit legally to providing public access in perpetuity, even though they have every intent to do so. Source: [The Public's Radio](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - On August 29, the NPS announced that they have awarded a \$112.76 million contract to Cianbro Construction of Pittsfield, Maine, to rehabilitate failing seawalls along a portion of Tidal Basin and on the Potomac River through West Potomac Park. Construction is expected to begin in mid-2024. The project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [National Mall and Memorial Parks](#)
- *New River Gorge National Park and Preserve* - On September 5, the park began a project to repair and replace the 821-step staircase on the Kaymoor Miners Trail. The project will take about three weeks and the staircase will be closed throughout

that time. It is expected to reopen around September 28. Other portions of the trail will remain open during construction. Source: [New River Gorge National Park and Preserve](#)

- *Pullman National Historical Park* - The park, with its partners, Pullman State Historic Site, the Historic Pullman Foundation, and Illinois Department of Natural Resources, has received a \$250,000 donation from Norfolk Southern to create an interactive trainyard and railcar exhibit in front of the Rear Erecting Shop adjacent to 111th Street. The exhibit is in the planning and design phase. Source: [Trains.com](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - On August 23, the park announced a prospectus release for a concession to sell bundled firewood at campgrounds in the park. The ten-year contract would begin on January 1, 2024. Proposals are due October 24. Source: [Rocky Mountain National Park](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - On September 1, Rocky Trail Press released a second edition of *Wild Light*, a coffee table book by Erik Stensland that celebrates Rocky Mountain in photographs and prose. Source: [Estes Park News](#)
- *Scotts Bluff National Monument* - On August 25, the park unveiled a new exhibit about the works of William Henry Jackson, a photographer and painter who depicted the American West and was influential in the early creation of national parks. Source: [Gering Courier](#)
- *Statue of Liberty National Monument* - The NPS has selected Statue City Cruises for a 10-year concession providing passenger ferry service between New York City and Liberty State Park, as well as Jersey City to Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island. They have been the concessioner since 2008. The new contract begins on March 1, 2024. Source: [Statue of Liberty National Monument](#)
- *Tribal Heritage Grants* (an NPS-administered program) - On August 28, the NPS announced \$603,149 in Tribal Heritage Grants for 10 projects in 6 states with 10 Tribal partners. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - Park volunteer Bill Sayre received the George and Helen Hartzog Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service for working with the interpretation team in visitor engagement and strategic planning. Source: [Los Alamos Daily Post](#)
- *Voyageurs National Park* - On September 5, the park began a project to replace the boat launch at the Kabetogama Lake Visitor Center. The launch area will be closed starting September 18. The new launch replaces a 40-year-old ramp that has deteriorated. The funding comes from the Repair Rehabilitation Maintenance Program. Source: [Voyageurs National Park](#)

- *War in the Pacific National Historical Park* - Divers from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration recently discovered five ten-foot-long steel planks off the western coast of Guam. The planks were identified as "Marston mats," which were used by the U.S. Navy during World War II to build roads on shifting sand surfaces. The diving expedition also found 250 other seafloor objects, including unexploded WWII mortars and artillery rounds. Source: [Miami Herald](#), [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Ocean Exploration](#)
- *War in the Pacific National Historical Park* - On September 1, the park started offering a new historic tour of Naval Base Guam, which is also the former site of Sumai, a large village on the island before World War II. The tours are being run jointly by the NPS and the U.S. Navy Joint Region Marianas. Source: [The Guam Daily Post](#)
- *Women's Rights National Historical Park* - WTVR published [an article](#) about the efforts of former NPS ranger Judy Hart to get the park established in 1982. Judy was also the first superintendent of the park. Judy has written a book about the effort, *A National Park for Women's Rights: The Campaign That Made it Happen*, which will be released on October 15. Source: WTVR
- *Wright Brothers National Memorial* - On September 5, the park, in partnership with Dare County Schools, announced the opening of First Flight High School's Aviation Lab at the park. Over the course of two years, high school juniors and seniors will construct an aircraft while learning principles of aerospace, electrical, mechanical, manufacturing, and design engineering. At the program's culmination, the aircraft will be tested and certified by the FAA, and each student will get to ride in the plane. The curriculum and build kit were designed by Tango Flight. Source: [Wright Brothers National Memorial](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - New wayside exhibits were recently installed at the boardwalks near Echinus Geyser in Norris Basin. The exhibits were designed in collaboration with Montana State University. They highlight the unique geothermal features of the basin, particularly newly-discovered microorganisms that are responsible for the area's deep red color. Source: [Montana State University](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - On August 26, The *Daily Montanan* published [an op-ed](#) by two board members from the Buffalo Field Campaign, arguing against current livestock management leasing practices on federal lands and arguing for co-stewardship of wild bison by sovereign Tribal nations. Much of the op-ed is a response to a July 4 *National Parks Traveler* [op-ed](#) arguing against Tribal management of Yellowstone bison. Source: *Daily Montanan*, *National Parks Traveler*
- *Zion National Park* - On August 22, a variety of groups held a "seed planting" celebration of the Zion National Park Discovery Center, a 22,000-square-foot building planned on a parcel of land just outside the park. The center is a

collaborative effort between the park, government officials, Zion National Park Forever Project, and local communities, to take visitation pressure off the main area of the park and develop new visitor opportunities at the east entrance. The center is expected to open in 2025. A local resident donated the land, while the Utah Department of Workforce Service's Permanent Community Impact Fund Board approved a \$15 million bond to fund most of the project. The Utah Department of Transportation also invested \$10 million toward road improvements for the project.

Source: [KSL](#)

- *Zion National Park* - On August 30, the park celebrated its 90-millionth boarding of the Zion Canyon Shuttle System, which started in 2000. Source: [Zion National Park](#)

Personnel Changes

- *Apostle Islands National Lakeshore* - The park, in partnership with Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, selected Peyton Martinson as the new park ranger cultural educator at the park. Payton is a Red Cliff Band member with experience teaching local students about the intersections of ecology, food, and culture. Source: [Apostle Islands National Lakeshore](#)
- *Capitol Reef National Park* - Cassity "Cass" Bromley was selected as the new superintendent. Cass has many years of NPS experience, most recently as the head of resource management and research at Zion National Park and as the interim superintendent at Capitol Reef. Source: [Capitol Reef National Park](#)
- *Intermountain Region* - Brian Carlstrom was selected as the new deputy regional director. Brian was most recently the superintendent at Cape Cod National Seashore. He will begin his new assignment on October 8. Source: [The Provincetown Independent](#)
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - Mike Gauthier was selected as the new superintendent. Mike has over 35 years of NPS experience, most recently as the superintendent at Mojave National Preserve and as interim superintendent at Lake Mead. He begins his new role in mid-September. Source: [Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - Dan Stahler was selected as the new lead of the Yellowstone Wolf Project. Dan has 20 years of NPS experience and has supported the Wolf Project for over 20 years, dating back to work as a volunteer and graduate student researcher in 1997. Source: [Yellowstone National 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

- Timothy "Tim" Robert Bywater, 81, passed away on August 21. Tim worked for the NPS for "more than 40 summers", including time in Washington, DC, Yellowstone National Park, Denali National Park and Preserve, and Grand Teton National Park. Source: [Legacy/The Salt Lake Tribune](#)
- Esther Mae Fisher, 102, passed away on August 21. Esther worked at Rocky Mountain National Park and Walnut Canyon National Monument, retiring in 1983. Source: [Estes Park News](#)

In the News

- Andrea Lankford, a former NPS law enforcement ranger, has written a new book, *Trail of the Lost: The Relentless Search to Bring Home the Missing Hikers of the Pacific Crest Trail*. Andrea is also the author of the 2010 memoir, *Ranger Confidential: Living, Working, and Dying in National Parks*. Source: [OPB](#)

Open for Comment

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

- *Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Curecanti National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through September 16](#) on a plan to change camping and boating fees in the parks. Source: [Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park](#)
- *Buck Island Reef National Monument* - Public comment has been extended through September 6 on a proposed anchoring permit fee. Comments can be submitted by mail, email, or phone (within specific calling windows). Source: [Buck Island Reef National Monument](#)
- *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](#)
- *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](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - Public comment is [open through September 8](#) on a plan to increase fees for campgrounds in the park. Source: [Glacier National Park](#)
 - *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](#)
 - *Isle Royale National Park* - Public comment is [open through September 26](#) on a draft Wilderness Stewardship Plan. Source: [Isle Royale National Park](#)
 - *Japanese American Confinement Grant Program* (an NPS-administered program) – Public comment is [open through September 15](#) on the guidelines and criteria for the newly-established Norman Y. Mineta Japanese American Confinement Education Grant Program. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
 - *Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve* - Public comment is [open through September 18](#) on a proposed plan to repair the trail system in Barataria Preserve, which was damaged heavily by Hurricane Ida. Source: [Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve](#)
 - *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](#)
 - *Yellowstone National Park* - Public comment is open [through September 25](#) on a bison management plan. Source: [Buckrail](#)

Other Department of the Interior (and U.S. Department of Agriculture) News

- *Badger-Two Medicine drilling settlement* - On September 1, the Department of the Interior reached a legal agreement with Selenex, LLC, to permanently retire the last remaining federal oil and gas lease in the Badger-Two Medicine area of the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest. The Blackfeet Indian Reservation is located adjacent to the area and the Blackfeet Nation has long sought the end of drilling due to the land's cultural importance to the Tribe. The lease had been caught up in a series of political and legal rulings since the leases were issued in the 1980s. Source: [Flathead Beacon](#)

- *Gray wolves in southern Sierra Nevada* - In July, a wildlife biologist observed an adult female gray wolf in Giant Sequoia National Monument (managed by the U.S. Forest Service). Further tracking and DNA analysis revealed a previously undetected pack of at least five individuals, the first in over 100 years. Source: [Los Angeles Times](#)
- *Carbon cost of public land grazing* - New research published in *Environmental Management* demonstrates that the social carbon cost associated with emissions from cattle grazing on public lands "vastly surpass" what the federal government receives in grazing fees. Furthermore, the study outlines that public land livestock grazing exceeds Environmental Protection Agency standards on industrial greenhouse gas emissions. Source: [The Wildlife News](#)
- *SunZia transmission line groundbreaking* - On September 1, a groundbreaking was held for the SunZia transmission project, which is expected to transport up to 4,500 megawatts of energy from New Mexico to Arizona and California. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Offshore wind project* - On August 22, the Department of the Interior announced approval for the Revolution Wind project, located 15 nautical miles southeast of Point Judith, Rhode Island. The project will provide 704 megawatts of energy. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *First Gulf wind auction* - On August 29, the Department of the Interior hosted its first-ever offshore wind energy auction for the Gulf of Mexico region, resulting in one lease awarded to RWE Offshore US Gulf, LLC, with a bid of \$5.6 million for the Lake Charles Lease Area. The lease is expected to generate 1.24 gigawatts of offshore wind energy capacity. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Offshore oil worker safety* - On August 22, the Department of the Interior announced a final well control rule from the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement to enhance worker safety in offshore oil and gas operations on the Outer Continental Shelf. The rule includes lessons learned from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon explosion that killed 11 people and caused billions of dollars in environmental damage and economic loss. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

Congressional Actions

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

Senate Actions

August 22 – September 1 – The Senate was on its annual summer recess during this time. It convened for pro forma sessions on August 22, 25, 29, and September 1; no business was conducted relating to the National Park Service.

House Actions

August 22 – September 1 – The House was on its officially designated “district work period,” also known as its annual summer recess, during this reporting time. The House convened for pro forma sessions on August 22, 25, 29, and September 1; no business was conducted relating to the National Park Service.

Incidents

Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.

Arches National Park

Bat bites visitor

Park staff have observed a pattern of "unusual" bat behavior in the park, including a visitor getting bitten. On August 18, a bat at the visitor center was confirmed to have rabies. The park is encouraging anyone who has had contact with a bat in the park to get tested immediately. Source: [Idaho Statesman](#)

Bryce Canyon National Park

Hiker fatality

On August 25, a 64-year-old was reported overdue from an afternoon hike on the Fairyland Loop trail. A search was started, with personnel from the NPS, Garfield County (UT) Sheriff's Office, and the Utah Department of Public Safety. The individual was found that night in Campbell Canyon, about a mile east of the Fairyland Loop. They were pronounced deceased at the scene. The cause of death was not announced, but the park noted in its press release regarding the incident that flash flooding occurred that afternoon in dry washes along the Fairyland Loop. Source: [Bryce Canyon National Park](#)

Canaveral National Seashore, Cape Lookout National Seashore, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Castillo de San Marcos National Monument, Charles Pinckney National Historical Site, Congaree National Park, Cumberland Island National Seashore, Dry Tortugas National Park, Fort Matanzas National Monument, Fort Pulaski National Monument, Fort Raleigh National Historic Site, Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie National Historical Park, Moores Creek National Battlefield, Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve, Wright Brothers National Memorial

Hurricane Idalia

Many NPS units (see above) along the southeastern seaboard closed or advised strong visitor caution ahead of Hurricane/Tropical Storm Idalia, which was expected to bring high winds and many inches of rain to the area. Additionally, Hurricane Franklin has caused elevated tides and "life threatening rip currents."

Charles Pinckney, Dry Tortugas, and Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie reopened on August 31. Canaveral partially reopened, with Apollo boardwalk 1a and parking area 6, and Playalinda parking area 3 still closed.

Cumberland Island, Fort Raleigh, and Wright Brothers reopened on September 1.

Cape Hatteras mostly reopened on September 1, except for Cape Point and Ocracoke Campgrounds. Cape Hatteras then re-closed a stretch of beach between Buxton Beach Access and the Buxton jetties on September 1 due to observations of substantial post-storm beach erosion and "reports of a strong smell of fuel" from visitors, which may be an indicator of exposure of hazardous infrastructure from a former military site in Buxton.

Moores Creek experienced extensive flooding and was closed through September 4.

Source: [National Parks Traveler](#), [Charles Pinckney National Historic Site](#), Canaveral National Seashore (8/29, 8/31), [Fort Pulaski National Monument](#), Moores Creek National Battlefield (8/30, 9/1), [Dry Tortugas National Park](#), [Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie National Historical Park](#), [Cape Hatteras National Seashore](#)

Cape Hatteras National Seashore

Ocean fatalities

On September 4, a 28-year-old was observed being overtaken by strong waves and disappearing into the surf near the northern section of the village of Avon. Just after, the individual was observed face-down in "rough ocean conditions." A visitor called 911. Two bystanders, including one with a bodyboard, were able to bring the individual to shore. Personnel from the NPS, Dare County (NC) Emergency Medical Services, and Hatteras Island Rescue Squad responded. CPR was enacted, but resuscitation efforts were unsuccessful. Source: [Cape Hatteras National Seashore](#)

On September 5, a 68-year-old was swimming in the ocean off southern Hatteras Island, near off-road vehicle ramp 55, when they began to shout for help. Two bystanders observed the individual go under water, swam out to retrieve them, then pulled them to shore. A 911 call was placed. Personnel from the NPS, Dare County Sheriff's Office, Dare County Emergency Medical Services, Hatteras Island Rescue Squad, and North Carolina Highway Patrol responded. CPR was administered, but resuscitation efforts were unsuccessful. Source: [Cape Hatteras National Seashore](#)

Gateway National Recreation Area

High bacteria levels

On September 1, the park closed the beaches at Great Kills Park due to high bacterial levels in water samples. Source: [Gateway National Recreation Area](#)

Glacier National Park

Hiker fatality

On August 30, a 32-year-old was reported overdue from a climb on Reynolds Mountain the day prior. The individual's car was found at Logan Pass and a ground search began in rainy, windy, and foggy conditions. After a public announcement about the missing individual, visitors called in to the tip line, which "directly contributed to finding" the individual. On September 1, the individual was found deceased by ground searchers on Reynolds Mountain. The cause of death is under investigation. Agencies involved in the rescue included the NPS, North Valley Search and Rescue, Flathead County Search and Rescue, U.S. Forest Service, Flathead County Sheriff's Department, and Two Bear Air Rescue. Source: [Glacier National Park](#)

Grand Canyon National Park

E.coli

On August 25, the park announced that E. coli bacteria had been detected in the water supply close to Phantom Ranch. The park is collecting more samples to understand the source of the bacteria and is chlorinating water in the area. Source: [AP News](#)

Independence Hall National Historical Park

Road rage fatality

On August 26, a "verbal altercation" related to "road rage" took place at the intersection of S. Independence Mall East and Chestnut Street in Philadelphia, PA. The incident led to a 36-year-old in a Cadillac opening fire on a group of motorcyclists. A 29-year-old was hit twice. A 24-year-old in the motorcyclist group fired back at the Cadillac driver, hitting them in the arm, as well as many shots on the car itself. The Cadillac driver drove away from the scene and later arrived at the Pennsylvania Hospital for care. The 24-year-old was detained at the scene by NPS personnel. Philadelphia Police Department personnel also responded. The 29-year-old was rushed to Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, where they were pronounced deceased. No charges have yet been filed. Source: [WHYY](#), [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#)

Katmai National Park and Preserve

Aircraft collision

On September 4, a helicopter and a small plane collided midair while flying north of Lake Coville near the American Creek drainage. Both aircraft were able to make an emergency landing. The helicopter pilot was able to walk away from the crash, but was evacuated to King Salmon and then transported to Anchorage for medical assessment. There were no other injuries in the crash. Plans to recover the two aircraft are ongoing. An investigation will be conducted by the National Transportation Safety Board. Source: [Katmai National Park and Preserve](#)

Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park

Bear activity

On August 23, the park's campground in Dyea was closed due to bear activity that caused property damage and raised concerns for public safety. The park reopened the campground on September 5, and the park has asked the public to report any bear activity in the area. Source: [Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park](#)

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve

Drowning

On August 20, a 21-year-old and their 47-year-old parent were "wading or swimming" in shallow water below Tanalian Falls when the younger person was pulled into deeper water by the current. Their parent went into the faster water to attempt a rescue but was swept away. The younger individual was able to self-rescue and exit the water. Volunteers at Port Alsworth saw the older victim unconscious at the mouth of the river and pulled them from the water. Members of the Port Alsworth Volunteer Fire Department, medical personnel from the Southcentral Foundation Lake Clark Wellness Center, and other bystanders tried to resuscitate the individual, but their attempts were unsuccessful. The incident is under investigation by the NPS and Alaska State Troopers. No foul play is suspected. Source: [Anchorage Daily News](#), [USA Today](#)

Manzanar National Historic Site

Flooding

From August 20-22, Shepherd Creek, to the north of the park, breached its banks multiple times due to heavy rainfall brought on by Tropical Storm Hilary. Water damaged sections of the park's self-guiding tour road and site boundary roads. Mud was carried into four Japanese gardens at Merritt Park, Block 34 Garden, Hospital Garden, and Arai Fish pond in Block 33. Historic orchards, roads, and landscape features were damaged, and several archaeological sites were washed away or buried. None of the buildings were impacted. Park staff, with support from Yosemite National Park, CalFire, and the California Department of Corrections Rehabilitation fire crew have been working to repair damage on the tour road and at Merritt Park. The park's visitor center, administration area, and Block 14 exhibits are open to the public, while the rest of the park remains closed.

Source: [The Rafu Shimpo](#)

North Cascades National Park

Bear habituation

The park has had several instances of bears obtaining human food in the park, necessitating closures. In addition to May incidents at Cascade Pass Trailhead (see [7/5/23 Coalition Report](#)) that caused officials to close the picnic area, bears have recently gotten into human food, approached people, and destroyed property in the remote Terror Basin area. The park has closed the Terror Basin cross-country zone until further notice. Source:

[The Columbian](#)

Petersburg National Battlefield

Sinkhole

On September 1, the park closed the Eastern Front Unit tour road due to the development of a new sinkhole near tour stop 4. The park is working on emergency repairs for next two to three weeks. A larger repair and paving project is planned for the area in 2024. Source:

[Petersburg National Battlefield](#)

Saguaro National Park

Wind storm

On August 22, a large windstorm knocked down at least 100 large saguaro cacti in the park. Winds were calculated as high as 62 miles per hour. The park has stated that this wind damage does not pose a long-term threat to the area's saguaro or wildlife populations because there are more than 2 million saguaros in the park. Source:

[Tucson.com](#)

Shenandoah National Park

Fishing closure

On August 31, the park closed all fishing on rivers and streams in the park due to extremely low stream flows and warm water temperatures, which are stressful for fish. The closure will remain in place until conditions improve. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)

Shenandoah National Park

Missing hiker found

On September 1, a 75-year-old was reported missing. The individual had been last seen on August 30. Their backpack was found in Pinefield Hut off Skyline Drive in the park. On September 2, a group of searchers found the individual in the southern part of the park, near Ivy Creek. Agencies involved in the search included the NPS, Virginia Department of Emergency Management, Blacksburg Rescue Squad, K9 Alert, Shenandoah Mountain Rescue Group, Tidewater Search and Rescue, Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue, Mid-Atlantic D.O.G.S., Virginia Search and Rescue Dog Association, DOGS-East Search and Rescue, Black Diamond Search and Rescue, Virginia Search and Rescue Dog Association, Rocking-ham-Augusta Search and Rescue, Christian Aid Ministries Search and Rescue, Search and Rescue Tracking Institute, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Source: Shenandoah National Park ([9/1](#), [9/2](#))

Wrangell-St Elias National Park and Preserve

Plane crash

On August 27, a plane travelling from Glennallen to Ketchikan was reported overdue by

the Alaska Rescue Coordination Center. The plane was believed to be carrying a 59-year-old and a 58-year-old. The last known communication with the aircraft was 18 mile inland of Cape Yakataga. The following day, August 28, an Alaska Air National Guard plane attempted to search the area, but deteriorating weather hampered the effort. That evening, a U.S. Coast Guard plane located airplane wreckage north of the summit of Mt. Leeper on a heavily glaciated area with deep crevasses. Weather conditions over the following four days, August 29 to September 1, impeded the ability to access the crash site. Due to the elapsed time and continued poor weather, the individuals are believed to be deceased and recovery plans have been delayed until conditions improve. Source: [Wrangell-St Elias National Park and Preserve](#)

Yellowstone National Park

Off-trail trespass

On August 22, a 49-year-old suffered a non-life-threatening injury to their foot while illegally traveling off-trail in a thermal area of the park. The following day, the individual was arraigned for charges of "thermal trespass" and "being under the influence of alcohol dangerous to self or others." As a condition of their release, they have been banned from Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks until the case is resolved. The investigation is still underway and a trial date has not yet been set. Source: [CNN](#)

Yosemite National Park

Possible cold case resolution

A suspect in their mid-70s was arrested in Texas in connection with the 1986 disappearance of a 15-year-old in Modesto, California. The individual had been a suspect at the time, but was never arrested then. A witness claims that the individual told a story of killing an individual and burying their body at "a campground near the Big Oak Flat entrance" in Yosemite. The suspect was already serving time in a Texas prison for violations of sex offender registration and will soon be sent to Stanislaus County to face charges. Source: [New York Post](#)

Wildfires

- *Denali National Park and Preserve* - On August 5, the Clear Creek Fire (#277) was identified. As of August 16, the fire was 52,966 acres. Approximately 1,000 acres are within the northern boundary of Denali, along the Toklat River and the rocky ridges to its west. Based on weather and current fire behavior, the fire is not expected to grow. The fire is currently in "monitor status." Source: [Denali National Park and Preserve](#), [Alaska Interagency Coordination Center](#)
- *Mount Rainier National Park* - On August 25, a lightning strike started the Twin Firs Fire just north of the Nisqually Road between Kautz Creek and the Twin Firs Trail. The fire was successfully contained at about half an acre on August 29. No park structures were affected. The Twin Firs Trail was closed temporarily and has

now reopened. Source: Mount Rainier National Park ([8/27](#), [8/29](#))

- *North Cascades National Park* - On August 15, the park closed several trails, camps, and backcountry zones in the Bridge Creek and Blue Lake area due to the Blue Lake Fire, which is burning near State Route 20 milepost 160, 30 miles west of Winthrop, WA, on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Source: [North Cascades National Park](#)
- *Olympic National Park* -
 - On August 28, a lightning strike started the Hurricane Fire, burning in the Hurricane Ridge area. As of September 5, the fire was about 4 acres and 75% contained. 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 5, it was about 70 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 (20 acres, 3 miles northeast of Anderson Pass), Low Divide Fire (4.5 acres, in the North Fork of the Quinault drainage), and Delabarre Fire (1 acre, 3 miles southeast of Mount Christie).
 - On September 2, a small fire near Martins Lake was spotted by a reconnaissance flight. As of September 2, it was estimated at 0.1 acres.
 - Source: Olympic National Park ([8/30](#), [9/1](#), [9/2](#), [9/5](#))
- *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 3, the Six Rivers Forest Lightning Complex and Redwood Lightning Complex comprised 16,479 acres and were 20% contained, with 1,246 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 2, the fire was 6,234 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. There is no estimated reopening date yet. Source: North Cascades National Park (7/29 - [first report](#), [second report](#), [7/30](#), [7/31](#), [8/30](#)), [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 3, it was 262 acres and posed no threats to life or property. Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Inciweb](#)

- *Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve* -
 - On July 24, the Biederman Fire #192 was discovered north of Biederman Bluff on the Yukon River, five miles northwest of the Kandik-Yukon Rivers confluence. On August 23, an agency aircraft observed no smoke and no fire activity. The fire burned 76 acres. Source: [Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve, Alaska Interagency Coordination Center](#)
 - On July 27, the Ruby Creek Fire #282 was discovered by reconnaissance aircraft, located in the Upper Charley River, south of Three Fingers airstrip. As of August 21, a detection flight observed a 0% active perimeter and no active fire behavior. The fire burned 60 acres. Source: [Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve, Alaska Interagency Coordination Center](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Channel Islands National Park* - Investigators from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives have determined that the fire aboard the *Conception* dive boat just off the coast of Santa Cruz Island on September 2, 2019, was started inside a plastic trash can on the main deck. A source of ignition has not been identified. 34 people were trapped below deck by the flames and died of smoke inhalation. The captain of the ship is scheduled to be tried in federal court next month for 34 counts of manslaughter. Prosecutors argue that the captain did not use an overnight roving watch commander, as required by Coast Guard regulations. On August 31, the captain's attorneys filed a motion to dismiss the case because the ATF investigation "could not determine the cause of the fire." The families of those who died have also sued the U.S. Coast Guard for certifying the boat despite safety issues. Source: [Los Angeles Times](#)
- *Death Valley National Park* - On August 21, the NPS and Caltrans road crews were able to open an exit lane on Highway 190 to allow residents, employees, and travelers stuck in the park to exit. Around 400 people were stuck in the park for about 24 hours in the aftermath of major flash flood damage (see [8/23/23 Coalition Report](#)). "All paved and unpaved roads in Death Valley have been damaged and are closed" and many of the utility systems were damaged in the storm. The entire park is closed to the public. The park will likely reopen in stages and "it may be weeks before Furnace Creek and Stovepipe Wells open." The endangered Devils Hole pupfish population was reported to be in good condition. The *Las Vegas Review-Journal* published [a feature](#) with photos and video of damage from the storm. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#), [Death Valley National Park Facebook page](#), *Las Vegas Review-Journal*
- *Denali National Park and Preserve* - On August 28, the National Transportation Safety Board released its preliminary report on the plane crash that killed two

people on August 9 (see [8/23/23 Coalition Report](#)). No new significant details have been released since the last *Coalition Report*. The full preliminary report can be found [here](#). Source: [Alaska News Source](#)

- *Mojave National Preserve* - On September 1, the park partially reopened for the first time since damage was incurred by Hurricane Hilary on August 20. The areas now open include South Kelbaker Road, Kelso Cima Road, Morning Star Road, and a portion of Ivanpah Road between Morning Star Mine and Nipton Roads. The park has stated that it will likely take several more weeks before other park facilities and roads can be reopened. Source: [Mojave National Preserve](#)
- *Stonewall National Monument* - On August 28, a 25-year-old was arrested and charged with a hate crime and "criminal mischief" in connection with the removal and destruction of several transgender Pride flags on the fence of Christopher Park in June (see [6/21/23 Coalition Report](#)). The individual entered a plea of not guilty. Source: [USA Today](#)

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

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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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