



The Coalition Report

Wednesday, March 5, 2025

Coalition Actions

The Coalition continues to give dozens of interviews to the press condemning the federal workforce cuts and other actions that have drastically affected the National Park Service. Members are emphasizing impacts to parks and employees on a national level in outlets such as [USA Today](#), [The Independent](#), and [The Hill](#), and speaking to more local impacts at parks across the country, from California to North Carolina, such as recent articles in the [Ventura County Star](#) and [Smoky Mountain News](#).

We joined a group of unions, small businesses, veterans groups, and conservation organizations in [a filing for a temporary restraining order](#) against the Office of Personnel Management, calling recent actions, “one of the most massive employment frauds in the history of this country.” On February 25, [the court ruled in our favor](#). (See more below in “National/Regional NPS Updates”) Another court hearing is scheduled for March 13.

The Coalition joined 246 other organizations in [a letter](#) to Congress opposing legislative bills in the Senate and House that attempt to repeal or undermine the Antiquities Act.

We released [a statement](#) condemning the Trump Administration’s email demanding federal employees summarize their accomplishments for the week or they would be considered resigned (see more in “National/Regional NPS Updates”).

The Coalition joined [over 260 groups](#) in a letter to the U.S. House of Representatives in opposition to H.Con.Res.14, a budget resolution that would have wide ranging effects on everyday workers and families, immigrants, and the environment.

We joined 495 groups in [a letter](#) to the U.S. House of Representatives asking them to reverse the terminations of 5,700 federal employees in public lands management.

Coalition Executive Council Member Jeff Mow and Chip Weber, former supervisor of the Flathead National Forest wrote [an op-ed](#) published in the *Flathead Beacon* arguing that the Department of

Government Efficiency has reduced efficiency rather than increased it, and its actions will negatively affect visitors and the tourism economy. Source: *Flathead Beacon*

The Coalition joined 22 other organizations in [a letter](#) to the Environmental Protection Agency supporting its proposal to disapprove the West Virginia Regional Haze State Implementation Plan for the Second Implementation Period due to many flaws, including poor modeling that discounted nitrogen oxide emissions and a lack of analysis for many polluting facilities.

We submitted [comments](#) to the Bureau of Land Management's Montana-Dakotas Office regarding the 2025 Third Quarter Oil and Gas Lease Sale, asking it to defer three parcels adjacent or close to Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

We submitted [a letter](#) to the Maryland Environment and Transportation Committee in support of HB-741, a bill to phase out lead ammunition.

The Coalition joined the National Parks Conservation Association and the National Trust for Historic Preservation in [a joint amicus brief](#) in American Battlefield Trust, et al. v. Board of Supervisors for Orange County, Virginia, et al. The lawsuit argues that the county's rezoning vote that would fast-track a development project adjacent to Wilderness Battlefield at Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park, was done with "significant procedural violations." The amicus brief offers a history of Wilderness Battlefield and the risks of development.

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.

Editor note: There were many, many, many articles outlining how recent Executive Orders and Office of Personnel Management actions will affect the NPS, writ large, and specific parks, in particular. This selection is mostly focused on the broad picture, with a few select articles to give context.

- *Reduction in Force mandated* - On February 26, the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Personnel Management issued a memo giving the heads of federal agencies guidance on President Donald Trump's executive order to "initiate large-scale reductions in force." Agencies have been given until March 13 to develop Agency Reorganization Plans that will increase productivity, reduce full-time equivalent positions, reduce real property footprint, and reduce the budget. Source: [U.S. Office of Personnel Management](#)
 - The *Island Free Press* published [an article](#) that gives an overview of what Cape Hatteras National Seashore and the Outer Banks Group NPS sites might experience under the Reduction in Force, informed by an interview with Coalition Executive Council Member (and former Outer Banks Group superintendent) Mike Murray. Source: *Island Free Press*

- Federal judge rules against probationary firings, OPM edits memo* - On February 27, a federal judge issued a temporary restraining order against the Office of Personnel Management's firing of staff on probationary status at six agencies involved in the lawsuit, including the National Park Service. The court ruled that OPM does not have the right to order the firing of employees outside of its own agency. A lawyer for the OPM argued that they had "asked, not ordered" the agencies to fire the employees, and therefore, did nothing illegal. The judge's ruling called for a rescinding of OPM memos and "all other efforts by OPM to direct the termination of employees." However, the ruling does not cover all federal agencies, only those associated with the civic groups in the lawsuit, because the labor unions involved do not have sufficient standing as they are required to work through the independent agencies that handle federal government personnel complaints. A separate complaint is working its way through those agencies (see next bullet). On March 4, the OPM edited its January 20 memo that asked agencies to fire probationary status employees, with the language that "OPM is not directing agencies to take any specific performance-based actions regarding probationary employees. Agencies have ultimate decisionmaking [sic] authority over, and responsibility for, such personnel actions." It is yet unclear if all probationary employees will be reinstated/rehired and if so, on what timeline. Source: [National Public Radio](#), [Government Executive](#) [Editor note: The Coalition is the group representing the NPS in the lawsuit (see above).]
- Fired workers reinstated by MSPB* - On February 25, the Merit Standards Protection Board reinstated the employment of six federal workers at least through April 10, per a request by the Office of Special Counsel, which is investigating the firings. OSC has determined that there are "reasonable grounds" to investigate, as it appears the agencies violated their job protections by firing them at-will, despite no performance issues. The six employees worked at the Departments of Education, Energy, Housing and Urban Development, Agriculture, Veterans Affairs, and the Office of Personnel Management. Source: [National Public Radio](#)
- Federal workers to detail work weeks or resign* - On February 22, the Office of Personnel Management sent out an email to federal employees with the subject line, "What did you do last week?" It asked staff to respond with "approx. [sic] 5 bullets of what you accomplished this week" by February 24 at midnight, and if they did not respond, they would be considered resigned. Officials at several federal agencies told staff to hold off on responding and await further guidance, sowing confusion among employees. OPM later said compliance was optional. On February 28, a similar email was sent out OPM. This time, the Department of Defense and Department of Health and Human Services have told their employees that compliance is mandatory and non-compliance could lead to "further review." The groups involved in the lawsuit about probationary hearings, including the Coalition (see above), have added a filing to the lawsuit to stop OPM from sending these emails. Source: [New York Times](#), [Government Executive](#) (2/24, 3/3)
- ~700 NPS employees choose voluntary resignation* - On February 25, an internal agency memo at the Department of the Interior announced that 700 NPS employees submitted their resignations through the "Fork in the Road" email that offered employees the

opportunity to resign and get paid through the end of the fiscal year (September 30). (That funding has not been allocated and it remains unclear whether it will be paid out.) Those employees will not be permitted to work after March 7 *[Editor note: We have heard from park personnel that this end date may have actually been March 3, but cannot officially verify.]* Source: [New York Times](#)

- *Profiles of DOI staffers who were fired* - E&E News published [an article](#) highlighting the stories of several Interior Department staff members that were fired recently due to being in their probationary period. They included the assistant manager of the dog sled kennels at Denali National Park and Preserve, Mitch Flanagan, and a carnivore biologist at Yosemite National Park, Andria Townsend. It also profiled Kristin Jenn, whose new NPS job (park unspecified) was rescinded. Kristin had previously worked two seasons as an interpretive ranger at Denali National Park and Preserve. Source: E&E News *[Editor note: There are countless examples of profiles for NPS staff who had their jobs rescinded or were fired through recent Executive Actions. I chose to publish this one for its breadth of examples across the DOI.]*
- *Poll shows Republicans support NPS* - In a recent poll, the State of the Rockies Project found that 81% of people who self-identified as “MAGA supporters” said they were in support of the National Park Service. It also found that 83% of Republicans and 81% of MAGA supporters were in favor of keeping national monument designations. Source: [Public News Service](#)
- *Lawsuit to get DOGE records* - Several agencies have sued the federal government to attempt to gain access to the records for the Department of Government Efficiency. They argue that if the organization is a federal agency, then it is subject to the Freedom of Information Act, and if it is not a federal agency, then its funding was not legally allocated and should be returned to existing federal agencies. The Trump Administration has stated that DOGE exists within the Executive Office of the President. Source: [Government Executive](#)
- *Op-ed about federal employees helping with government efficiencies* - The Bangor Daily News published [an op-ed](#) by Bill Gawley, a recently-retired NPS biologist at Acadia National Park, outlining five solutions for government efficiency: invest in the agencies, allow administrative teams to specialize for their work, invest in the workforce, incentivize improvement, and use listening tours to learn from the vast expertise of long-time federal workers. Source: *Bangor Daily News*
- *Christian news outlet op-ed against NPS firings* - Christianity Today published [an op-ed](#) by Clarissa Moll, a moderator of “The Bulletin,” a podcast for the media outlet. It outlines the tragic death of her husband in Mount Rainier National Park and the support she felt during that incident and in many years since then by NPS staff. The op-ed argues against the firings of NPS staff. Source: *Christianity Today*

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- Big Bend National Park** - On February 24, the park announced that a species previously unknown to science was discovered. It was named “wooly devil”, or *Ovicula biradiata* (“tiny sheep two-ray petals”). It was discovered by a botany volunteer and an interpretive park ranger in March 2024 in a remote area of “the northern reaches of the park.” Scientists from the park, California Academy of Sciences, Sul Ross University, and Centro Interdisciplinario de Investigación para el Desarrollo Integral Regional conducted a study on the plant, with research published in the journal *PhytoKeys*. Source: [Big Bend National Park](#)
- Big Bend National Park** - The week of February 24, park leadership began discussions with the Department of Defense’s U.S. Northern Command about establishing a military presence in the park for the first time since the 1990s, per a mandate of President Donald Trump to cut down on migration from Mexico. There has been Border Patrol activity in the park for many years, but not military. The last time the military had a presence in the park, a local high school student was killed by a U.S. Marine while herding goats near his home under murky circumstances. The Pentagon pulled the military from the border after that incident. Source: [Texas Standard](#), [Marfa Public Radio](#)
- Cuyahoga Valley National Park** - On March 3, the park began a project to install a new culvert for Brandywine Creek on the Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath Trail. It is closed between Red Lock Trailhead and Brandywine Creek through the end of the project, which is expected to be on May 2. Source: [Cuyahoga Valley National Park](#)
- Gateway Arch National Park** - On May 3, the Old Courthouse will officially reopen after an extensive renovation, including new exhibits, enhanced accessibility, and structural updates. It is the last phase of the \$380 million CityArchRiver Project, the largest public-private partnership in NPS history. Source: [Gateway Arch National Park](#)
- Gateway National Recreation Area** - On February 28, the Department of the Interior announced that the NPS signed a new 10-year lease with Williams Transco for the use of historic hangars in Floyd Bennett Field as a natural gas metering and regulating station. Williams Transco has held the lease since 2013. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- Glen Canyon National Recreation Area** - On March 1, the park began a project to channelize the river mile 12 slough to prevent reproduction of smallmouth bass in the Colorado River below Glen Canyon Dam. The project is expected to be complete by June. Source: [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#)
- Golden Gate National Recreation Area** - On February 19, President Donald Trump issued an executive order asking the Presidio Trust to get rid of “all non-statutory functions.” The Trust is the quasi-government agency, established by Congress in 1996, to collaborate with the NPS and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy to manage the Presidio.

The Trust has stated publicly that they are confident their work is all statutorily-based. The Trust has not received appropriations from Congress since 2013 because they have become solvent through leasing historic buildings in the Presidio. Source: [KTVU](#)

- *Pearl Harbor National Memorial - Stars and Stripes* published [an article](#) about the ongoing efforts by the NPS to preserve six 1930s-era mooring quays in Pearl Harbor, some of the few remnants that still remain since the 1941 attacks by Japanese forces on the naval base. The project is being completed by the Historic Preservation Training Center. Source: *Stars and Stripes*
- *Pecos National Historical Park* - On February 20, the National Park Trust announced it has transferred a 2.18-acre property to the park. It is located within the boundaries of the park, “at the heart of the historic Glorieta Pass battlefield.” The property was acquired with support of the National Park Foundation. Source: [National Park Trust](#)
- *National Capital Parks - East* - On March 3, the NPS began a project to rehabilitate Folger Park, located in Capitol Hill. It will include repairs to the historic walkways and plaza, the repair and installation of benches, and restoration of plaza vegetation. The park will be closed for the duration of the project, which is expected to be completed in Winter 2025. Source: [Capitol Hill Parks](#)
- *Stonewall National Monument* - The Preservation League of New York State and 30 other organizations have joined on [a statement](#) against the recent move by the NPS to remove all instances of the words “transgender” and “queer” from the Stonewall National Monument website. Source: [New York Almanack](#)
- *Vicksburg National Military Park* - On March 3, the NPS began repair work on Grant Circle and Union Avenue in the northern section of the park. Both “suffered catastrophic failures” in heavy rainfall in 2020 and have been closed ever since. The project is expected to be complete in November 2025. Source: [Vicksburg National Military 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

- Constance “Connie” Williams Ervin Andrews, 87, passed away on February 20. In her retirement, she spent several summers as a “national park guide” in Smoky Mountains National Park, Big Bend National Park, and Saguaro National Park. Source: [Johnson County Post](#)
- Dick T. Morishige, 95, passed away in February. Dick worked for the NPS from 1957-1993, including as the chief of the Western Museum Laboratory (which later merged with Harpers

Ferry), and as the chief of the branch of graphic arts and editing in the Graphic Systems Division at the Denver Service Center. He received the Director's Award for Excellence for Graphic Design in 1987. Source: NPS Denver Alumni group/Katherine Ziegenfus

- Duane Michael Olson, 69, passed away on February 21. Duane worked for the NPS at Badlands National Park from 1978 to 1986. Source: [Iron Mountain Daily News](#)
- Lester Wood recently passed away. Lester worked for the Blue Ridge Parkway for 30 years, including as the maintenance leader and supervisor in the Rocky Knob area. Source: [Moody Funeral Service and Crematory](#), Dan Brown

Open for Comment

Items will stay on this list until public comment has closed. Listed alphabetically, except for items affecting entire NPS, which are listed on top.

- *National Park Service* - Public comment is [open through March 17](#) on a proposed rule to determine where and how micromobility devices, such as e-scooters, hoverboards, and Segways, may be operated in national park units. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Assateague Island National Seashore* - Public comment is [open through March 18](#) on a proposal to remove requirements about vehicle weight ground clearance, and dimensions for driving on designated beaches and oversand routes. Source: [OC Today-Dispatch](#)
- *Flight 93 National Memorial, Friendship Hill National Historic Site, and Fort Necessity National Battlefield* - Public comment is [open through March 28](#) on a white-tailed deer management plan for the three parks. Source: [Flight 93 National Memorial](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - Public comment is [open through March 12](#) on a proposed fire management plan. Source: [Glacier National Park](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - Public comment is [open through March 19](#) on a concept plan for Tidal Basin. Source: [National Mall and Memorial Parks](#)

Public Comment Delayed

- *Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park* - Public comment for a development concept plan for Great Falls in Montgomery County, Maryland, originally scheduled from February 3 to March 7, has been delayed. New dates have not yet been announced. Source: [Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park](#)

Other Department of the Interior and U.S. Forest Service News

- *USFS chief retires, new chief enters-* On March 3, U.S. Forest Service Chief Randy Moore retired after 45 years of service. The new chief is Tom Schultz, who was previously the director of the Idaho Department of Lands and vice president of resources and government and affairs at a private timber company. Source: [Quetico Superior Wilderness News](#)

Congressional Actions

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

Senate Actions

Nothing to report, as the Senate continued to focus on the President's nominations for Cabinet and Agency appointments requiring Senate confirmation, held extensive discussions on the FY25 budget resolution, and conducted no business specifically related to the NPS.

House Actions

Nothing to report, as the House was on recess and/or pro forma session for several days (17, 18, 19, 20, and 21) and was focused on the FY25 budget resolution debate during the second week and conducted no business related specifically to the NPS.

Incidents

Listed alphabetically by park.

Many parks

Protests

Over the weekends of February 15-16 and 22-23, and March 1-2, many protests took place at NPS units across the country in response to executive actions related to the federal workforce. One that received a great deal of media attention was the hanging of an upside-down American Flag on El Capitan, as well as protest signs in view of webcams in Yosemite National Park. Source: [SFGate](#), [USA Today](#), [Los Angeles Times](#), [Denver7](#), [KIRO7](#), [The Times-Independent](#), [Grandview Independent](#), [Record-Courier](#), [Arkansas Times](#), [MorristownGreen.com](#), and many others

Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park, Gulf Islands National Seashore, Mammoth Cave National Park, Stones River National Battlefield

Winter storms

Several parks had short-term closures due to winter storms and freezing conditions. They have all since reopened. Source: [Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park](#), [Gulf Islands](#)

[National Seashore](#), [Mammoth Cave National Park](#), [Stones River National Battlefield](#)

Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park

Missing person

A 31-year-old has gone missing. Their last known whereabouts were in Montrose, Colorado, on February 12-13 and in Black Canyon of the Gunnison on the morning of February 13. The park is looking for any information the public can provide. Source: [Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park](#)

Mojave National Preserve

Mine conflict

The *Los Angeles Times* published [an article](#) about a conflict between an Australian mining company, Dateline Resources, Ltd., and the NPS over the legitimacy of a claim at the Colosseum Mine, which has rare earth minerals used in smartphones, advanced weapons, and electric vehicles. Dateline believes they have the right to work the mine under a plan the operators submitted 40 years ago when the land was managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The NPS claims that the company does not have authorization, and the area is rich with rare plants. The company has twice begun exploratory drilling and road improvements when told to cease their efforts. The NPS has issued a \$213,387 fine for the costs and damages associated with these actions. The parties have met to discuss a settlement, but no agreement has been reached, regarding fines nor future use of the mine. Source: *Los Angeles Times*

Point Reyes National Seashore

Lawsuit claims conspiracy

A new lawsuit was recently filed by a group of several dozen ranch tenants and workers, claiming that the recent settlement between the National Park Service, conservation organizations, and local ranchers that will allow the Nature Conservancy to buy most of the remaining ranch leases in the parks was an “illegal arrangement.” Tenants of the ranches will be evicted when the ranches change hands in May 2026. Source: [Point Reyes Light](#)

Zion National Park

Rockfall

On February 24, a 7-meter by 10-meter block of sandstone fell from the cliffs onto Zion Canyon Scenic Drive between the Great White Throne road pullout and Big Bend Shuttle Stop. Traffic was temporarily stopped, and after an evaluation, visitors were evacuated. The section of road remained closed for 24 hours for continued monitoring and assessment. The road was then cleared, with a total nine cubic meters of debris removed from the road. Traffic reopened on February 25. Source: [Zion National Park](#)

Zion National Park

Hiker rescue

On March 2, a hiker became injured about 1.5 miles up the Narrows. Other hikers provided care, and Hurricane Valley (UT) Fire and Rescue's Station 49 crew responded to assist. A Utah Department of Public Safety helicopter airlifted the hiker from the canyon and took them to a landing zone. They were driven to a local hospital for further evaluation and treatment. Source: [Fox13](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Mesa Verde National Park* - The 73-year-old that went missing in January 2024 (see [1/24/25 Coalition Report](#)) was found deceased. The park had conducted an intensive 10-day search when the individual first went missing, then conducted occasional searches in the area over the course of the past year. On February 28, during an off-trail grid search, a human remains detection canine located the individual's body. They were located in the original search area. Source: [Mesa Verde National Park](#)
- *National Park Service* - A federal court recently ruled that a group of plaintiffs suing the NPS for its cashless policy at several parks (see [3/20/24 Coalition Report](#)) lacked appropriate standing because they had not actually been denied entry to any parks. The plaintiffs have until March 7 to file a complaint addressing their standing. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)

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- Issue Contributors: Nicholas Carson, Phil Francis, Mike Murray, Bill Walters, Katherine Ziegenfus

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."

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.