



Coalition To Protect America's National Parks Weekly National Park System Report

Wednesday, January 10, 2018

Volume 2

Number 1

Incidents

Southeast Region

Update On Hurricane Recovery Operations

Although the better part of six months have passed since several hurricanes struck the Caribbean, Southeast and Gulf Coast, parks are continuing to repair damage and restore operations:

Everglades National Park – On December 21st, the park opened a temporary visitor contact station at its Gulf Coast entrance in Everglades City. Facilities in Everglades City were severely damaged by Hurricane Irma last September and most are scheduled to be demolished.

Virgin Islands National Park – All park roads, trails and beaches are now open to the public. “We've reached a major milestone at Virgin Islands National Park,” said Darrell Echols, the park's acting superintendent. “Maho Bay Beach reopened last Wednesday (December 13th), we finished the rest of the beaches Thursday and Friday (December 14th and 15th), and the remaining work at Annaberg Sugar Mill was completed Friday afternoon (December 15th). We are excited to welcome visitors back to their park.” All of the park's beaches have been checked for underwater debris, but visitors are advised that they should still exercise caution. Mooring buoys have been assessed and either cleared for use or had a red tag attached indicating it needs additional work. There are either working vault toilets or portable toilets available at the major beaches. Beach gear rentals are available at Honeymoon Beach and Trunk Bay Beach, but visitors will need to provide their own food and water at this time. Glass bottles are not allowed on park beaches.

Sources: Everglades NP [news release](#), Virgin Islands NP [news release](#).

Cape Cod National Seashore

Two Residences Destroyed In Arson Fires

Arson fires destroyed two park residential structures – the Brennan House and the Porter Cottage – just before Christmas.

Rangers and Wellfleet Fire Department firefighters responded to the still-smoldering scene on the morning of Saturday, December 23rd. All that remained of the Brennan House was its

foundation and chimney. Firefighters extinguished a small brush fire apparently caused by the burning structure, and rangers found that the nearby Porter Cottage was also burned to the ground. Both structures were unoccupied and no one was injured.

An interagency criminal investigation is being conducted by the NPS and the Massachusetts State Police Fire and Explosion Investigation Unit with the aim of identifying those responsible.

Source: Cape Cod NS [news release](#).

Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument Teen Lost For 24 Hours In Subfreezing Temperatures Found By Searchers

A teen lost in the park for 24 hours in subfreezing temperatures was found okay by searchers last Wednesday. The Mohave County Sheriff's Office had received a report concerning the lost teen on Tuesday.

A search and rescue effort was started with a ground team and a helicopter from the Department of Public Safety. Personnel from Washington County, Utah, and law enforcement rangers from the Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service all joined Mohave County in the search for the teen.

The teen disappeared while shed hunting (deer antler hunting) in a remote area southwest of Mt. Trumbull Schoolhouse and was not equipped to stay overnight in below freezing temperatures. On Wednesday afternoon, DPS rangers spotted the teen walking down a rough dirt road that vehicles rarely travel in winter.

The teen had walked three miles from where he had been last seen. This was the first time that he had been in the area and told rangers that he didn't know which way to go due to the confusing terrain. He had matches and was able to start a fire, but did not have food. When rescued he had no water left and there was no water in the area other than a dusting of snow on the ground. He was wearing only a moderately warm coat, jeans, ball cap, and hiking boots.

The teen's survival over several days would have been unlikely due to the cold and because of the lack of travelers in the area who could have helped him.

Source: Nexstar Media Group [news story](#).

News From Around Washington

Reports from Capitol Hill, the White House, the Department of the Interior, the National Park Service and other related agencies and NGO's.

Department of the Interior Early Out And Buyout Authority Available In NPS

Federal Retirement Planning, a non-OPM webpage that "helps federal employees and retirees find the information they need to make informed decisions about retirement and benefits," posted a story in October entitled "Early Retirement VERA & VSIP Incentives." The text follows:

"Many agencies are applying for Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) and Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments (VSIP) buyout authority for select groups of employees. The list is growing and includes the Department of the Interior, EPA, and State Department.

"These programs allow federal employees in organizations that are reorganizing or downsizing to offer early outs rather than lay employees off through a Reduction in Force (RIF). Agencies

find it easier to offer early outs to those who wish to leave than to lay federal employees off. Early outs have a larger budget impact over time than RIF's because younger employees, that would be subject to layoffs, generally receive lower pay and benefits than the senior employees that would be eligible for early retirement.”

The National Park Service circulated a memo on the subject in December. Here are the key paragraphs:

“The National Park Service (NPS) has been granted approval to offer Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments (VSIP) and Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) where eligible, to a number of employees. Soon, employees in identified positions will receive communication from the WASO Workforce and Inclusion (W&I) Directorate detailing the individualized offers of VSIP and VERA where eligible.

“In recent years, budget reductions and the absorption of fixed costs have constrained the ability of NPS units, including parks and program offices, to recruit and fill positions through attrition and existing workforce management authorities. High priority permanent positions remain lapsed in order to afford existing encumbered positions, and seasonal positions critical to the operation of national parks are not filled. Units have also seen their workload change as old processes are modernized and new responsibilities emerge. In addition, the success of recent previous VERA/VSIP offers in 2014 further supports the belief that approval for buyout authority would provide managers with a powerful tool to achieve workforce planning goals more quickly than attrition or other existing authorities.

“Please note that the VERA/VSIP approval announced in this message is a continuation of the effort begun in 2014. It is not a result of the Government-wide Reform Plan aimed at a reorganization of Executive Branch departments and agencies. The DOI Reform Plan has not been finalized, as it is still under planning and review by the Department, the Office of Management and Budget, and Congress.

“If you are offered a VERA or VSIP, your acceptance is completely optional. You will notice the first word in each of these authorities is ‘voluntary’ and that’s exactly how they should be interpreted. You are not encouraged one way or another to accept or decline. The decision is yours and you should think it over carefully...”

Source: Federal Retirement Planning [webpage](#), member emails.

Capitol Hill Legislative Roundup

New Public Laws

On December 22nd, the president signed into law:

- H.R. 1370, to make continuing appropriations through January 19, 2018, for federal agencies, including the Department of the Interior. (P. L. 115–96).
- H.R. 1, to reduce tax rates and modify policies, credits, and deductions for individuals and businesses. (P.L. 115–97). Among other provisions, section 13402 of the law extends the 20% historic preservation tax credit allowed under law, but modifies it by requiring those who claim it to spread out the credit over five taxable years instead of claiming the entire credit in the first taxable year in which a qualified rehabilitated building is placed in service.

Senate

On December 18th, the Senate agreed to the conference report for H.R. 1, to reduce tax rates and modify policies, credits, and deductions for individuals and businesses, with an amendment, by a vote of 51 yeas to 48 nays (the amendment was necessary because of a few provisions of the bill were found to be in violation of Senate rules). Among other provisions, section 13402 of the bill extends the 20% historic preservation tax credit allowed under law, but modifies it by requiring those who claim it to spread out the credit over five taxable years instead of claiming the entire credit in the first taxable year in which a qualified rehabilitated building is placed in service.

On December 21st, the Senate passed the following bills:

- S. 1438, to redesignate the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, MO, as the Gateway Arch National Park (the National Park Service had recommended the park be redesignated as the Gateway Arch National Monument).
- H.R. 1927, to establish within the National Park Service a U.S. Civil Rights Network that includes all NPS parks and programs that relate to the civil rights movement from 1939 through 1968 as well as related federal, state, local, and privately owned properties and related research, educational or interpretive programs carried out by non-governmental organizations. The bill will now be sent to the president for his signature.
- H.R. 267, to redesignate the Martin Luther King, Junior National Historic Site in GA as the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park and to expand the boundary to include the Prince Hall Masonic Temple, the headquarters of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The bill will now be sent to the president for his signature.
- H.R. 560, to provide access to certain vehicles servicing municipalities adjacent to the Delaware Gap National Recreation Area in PA via route 209. The bill will now be sent to the president for his signature.
- H.R. 863, to authorize administrative and visitor center facilities at Coltsville National Historical Park, CT to be located in appropriate buildings within the Colt Armory Complex instead of the East Armory building. The bill will now be sent to the president for his signature.
- S. 167, to designate a National Memorial to Fallen Educators at the National Teachers Hall of Fame in Emporia, KS.
- H.R. 954, to remove the use restrictions on a parcel of land transferred to Rockingham County, Virginia under the Federal Lands to Parks Program to allow its continued use as a day care center. The bill will now be sent to the president for his signature.
- H.R. 1242, to establish a commission to authorize activities and programs to recognize the contributions of African-Americans to the United States over the past 400 years. The bill will be sent to the president for his signature.
- H.R. 2611, to modify the boundary of the Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site to include seven historic structures across the street from the high school and make them eligible for financial and technical assistance from NPS. The bill will now be sent to the president for his signature.
- H.R. 1370, to make continuing appropriations through January 19, 2018, for federal agencies, including the Department of the Interior, by a vote of 66 yeas to 32 nays. The bill will now be sent to the president for his signature.

On January 3rd, the Senate returned to the president the nominations of Susan Combs of TX, to be assistant secretary for policy, management and budget, and Ryan Douglas Nelson of ID, to be solicitor, Department of the Interior, as well as that of Kathleen Hartnett White of TX, to be chair of the Council on Environmental Quality after all failed to be confirmed by the Senate prior to the adjournment of the first session of the 115th Congress.

House

On December 18th, the House agreed to the conference report for H.R. 1, to reduce tax rates and modify policies, credits, and deductions for individuals and businesses by a vote of 227 yeas to 203 nays. Among other provisions, section 13402 of the bill extends the 20% historic preservation tax credit allowed under law, but modifies it by requiring those who claim it to spread out the credit over five taxable years instead of claiming the entire credit in the first taxable year in which a qualified rehabilitated building is placed in service.

On December 19th, the House agreed, for a second time, to the conference report for H.R. 1, to reduce tax rates and modify policies, credits, and deductions for individuals and businesses by a vote of 224 yeas to 201 nays (the second vote on the conference report was necessary because the Senate amended it after a few provisions of the bill were found to be in violation of Senate rules). Among other provisions, section 13402 of the bill extends the 20% historic preservation tax credit allowed under law, but modifies it by requiring those who claim it to spread out the credit over five taxable years instead of claiming the entire credit in the first taxable year in which a qualified rehabilitated building is placed in service.

On December 21st, the House passed:

- H.R. 1370, to make continuing appropriations through January 19, 2018, for federal agencies, including the Department of the Interior, by a vote of 231 yeas to 188 nays.
- H.R. 4667, to make further supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2018, for disaster assistance for Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, and calendar year 2017 wildfires, by a yeas-and-nays vote of 251 yeas to 169 nays. The bill includes \$17.5 million from the Historic Preservation Fund for the restoration of historic structures and \$207.6 million for National Park Service construction needs.

Source: Don Hellman, former assistant director, legislative and congressional affairs for the National Park Service.

Park People, Friends and Allies

Washington Office

DOI Appoints Dan Smith Deputy Director

Secretary Zinke has appointed Paul Daniel (Dan) Smith as a new deputy director for the National Park Service. Here's the text of the news release, posted yesterday:

"Smith brings nearly four decades of public service experience, including serving as superintendent of Colonial National Historical Park in Virginia, to this important leadership role.

"As Deputy Director, Smith will have a crucial role in leading more than 20,000 National Park Service employees who care for America's 417 national parks and NPS programs that help communities across the nation preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities.

"Dan has a strong record of leadership in the National Park Service both in Washington and on the front lines as a superintendent of a park that tells the stories of some of the most consequential moments in American history,' said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. 'I can think of no one better equipped to help lead our efforts to ensure that the National Park Service is on firm footing to preserve and protect the most spectacular places in the United States for future generations.'

“Smith served as superintendent of Colonial National Historical Park from 2004 to 2015, where he managed a 23-mile parkway and three historic sites including the first permanent British colony in America at Jamestown and the site of the 1781 Revolutionary War victory of General George Washington over British General Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown. During his tenure at the park Smith oversaw the completion of a new visitor center and a new research center at Jamestown in preparation for the 400th anniversary commemoration of the settlement in 2007.

“Smith’s other assignments in the National Park Service include serving as Special Assistant to the National Park Service Director and Assistant Director of Legislative and Congressional Affairs. He also served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior, where he was responsible for the multi-billion dollar budgets and programs of the National Park Service and U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in coordination with congressional representatives, state and local governments, and other important partners. Smith worked at the General Services Administration for ten years.

“In addition to Smith’s Executive Branch experience he has held numerous important roles in the Legislative Branch as a staff member for a U.S. senator, a congressman, and two congressional committees.

“Smith was born in Maine. A Vietnam War veteran, Smith served in the U.S. Army’s 4th Infantry. He received his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Master of Science in Recreation Administration from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He is an Eagle Scout.”

Source: Office of Communications [news release](#).

Northeast Regional Office

Jonathan Meade Selected As ARD For Resource Stewardship And Science

Jonathan Meade has been selected as Northeast Region’s next associate regional director for resource stewardship and science. Meade has served as deputy regional director for Northeast Regional Office since 2014.

In his role as deputy regional director, Meade led the region’s superintendents and park operations in the southern portion of the 13-state region. Additionally, he led planning, maintenance, facilities, and design operations and directed human resource, IT and commercial service activities. In his new role, Meade will lead NPS efforts on natural and cultural resource management, planning and compliance activities, museum collections, and inventory and monitoring activities across the region.

Meade also previously served as Northeast Region's chief of business services, overseeing lands, leasing, concessions, recreation fees, commercial and special park-uses programs. Meade’s previous NPS experience includes a two-year tenure as the nationwide team lead for the Business Management Group in the Washington Office. This group implements the Business Plan Initiative and Scorecard programs for the Service. Other assignments with the NPS included a five-year stint in the Office of the Comptroller as a management analyst, where he helped launch both the BPI and Scorecard efforts.

In addition to Meade's work with the NPS, he was director of watershed programs for the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, vice president of planning for Heritage Conservancy, a regional land trust, and executive director of the four-state Highlands Coalition, an alliance of more than 200 land and water conservation groups.

Meade holds a bachelor’s degree in ecology from the University of Richmond and a master’s degree from Yale University’s School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. He was a

Fulbright Scholar in the Canadian Rockies, where he studied large scale conservation. He and his wife Melissa live outside Philadelphia with their three children.

Source: Northeast Region [news release](#).

Other News And Notes

National Park System

National Park Service In The News

A selection of recent news stories pertaining either directly or indirectly to the operation of the National Park Service.

- **Report Says Climate Change Has Massively Increased Snowfall On Denali** – The *Anchorage Daily News* recently carried a story on a newly-released report that shows that “snowfall in iconic Denali National Park has increased dramatically during the era of human-driven global warming.” Ice cores recording snowfalls over the past 1200 years show “an enormous upswing” in snowfall rates beginning around the time of the Industrial Revolution – snowfall used to be about 8 feet per year but is now closer to 18 feet per year. [Full story](#).
- **Breach Made By Superstorm Sandy At Fire Island May Not Be Repaired** – According to *Newsday*, a Long Island newspaper, the park is proposing to leave one of three breaches made by Sandy open to the ocean. That’s because it’s in the Otis Pike Fire Island High Dune Wilderness Area. The management plan, which has been published in the *Federal Register*, is awaiting a signoff by the regional director, probably this month. [Full story](#).
- **Researchers Find That Isle Royale Moose Are ‘Shrinking’** – Minnesota Public Radio has reported on a surprising finding made by Michigan Tech researchers who have been monitoring the island’s moose population for the past four decades: “Over those 40 years, [they found that] the size of [moose] skulls had shrunk by 16 percent, even as the moose population on the Lake Superior island flourished, tripling in the past decade to about 1,600 this year...The biggest reason researchers attributed to the decline in moose size is the increasing density of moose on the island, as the wolf population has collapsed. Researchers now say there may only be one wolf remaining on the island. The study found that skull size was smaller for moose born in years when moose were more abundant, because more moose means less food for each animal.” [Full story](#).

Department of the Interior

DOI In The News

A selection of recent news stories pertaining either directly or indirectly to the Department of the Interior or the Administration’s role in overseeing public lands.

- **Concerning The Return Of Dan Smith** – The *New York Daily News* has posted a background story on the naming of P. Daniel Smith as deputy director and then acting director of the National Park Service (see news release above). Smith retired from the NPS in 2014, but a decade earlier he got into hot water as special assistant to the agency’s director when “he reportedly acted as middle man when [an NFL team owner] wanted 130 trees removed at Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park so he could have a better view of the Potomac River from his Maryland mansion.” [Full story](#).

- **Secretary Babbitt Decries Administration Actions On Public Lands** – The December 1st edition of the *New York Times* carried an op-ed piece by former Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt entitled “Trump Is Vandalizing Our Wild Heritage.” Although it pertains largely to the then-pending decision on reducing the size of national monuments, the editorial also concerns the president’s myriad actions to diminish the protection of our public lands: “He is a vandal in our midst, coming in person to lay waste to the land. This theft of our heritage should awaken us to the damage being piled up across our public lands under this administration...” and to the fact that the “attack on America’s national monuments is but one front in his sweeping assault on protected lands and waters.” [Full story](#).
- **New Offshore Drilling Proposals Deemed ‘Assault On Common Sense’** – The *New York Times* on Monday had an editorial questioning two of Secretary Zinke’s latest proposals. The first is to open up vast areas of America’s offshore federal waters to oil drilling, much of them in coastal waters that President, for good reasons, ruled off limits; the second would roll back safety regulations for offshore drilling rigs put in place after the 2010 Deepwater Horizon blowout: “Is there not something wrong with that picture? Much has been made of the damage Mr. Zinke’s orders will do to Mr. Obama’s environmental legacy, already under attack throughout the Trump administration. They are also an assault on common sense. Thinking about the recklessness of expanding the possibilities for disaster while simultaneously weakening defenses against it dizzies the mind. And all in pursuit of what Mr. Zinke and President Trump call ‘energy dominance,’ a vaguely defined and, as far as crude oil is concerned, almost certainly unattainable goal.” [Full editorial](#).

Systemwide Park Operations Update

Short reports regarding the National Park System’s parks and its central, regional and training offices:

- **Obed Wild and Scenic River** – The park has grown by 161 acres – its largest addition in 30 years – through a donation by Mary Ann Gibbons, a former resident of East Tennessee. The property contains over two miles of river frontage along the heart of the Obed River, which includes some of the park’s most notable rapids, such as “Widowmaker” and “Keep Right.” It features some of the highest cliffs in the park, riverside cascades, major waterfalls, sandstone arches and chimneys, mature hardwood and hemlock forests and a remarkable diversity of plant and animal species. [Full news release](#).
- **Hawaii Volcanoes National Park** – Improvements to make the Mauna Loa Lookout wheelchair-friendly have been completed. The parking area and path to the Mauna Loa Lookout shelter were also reconstructed and repaved, and a new accessible vault toilet was installed. The entire 11.2-mile Mauna Loa Road is now open to vehicles. Visitors will also find a new wheelchair-friendly picnic table and accessible parking stall. [Full news release](#).
- **Cuyahoga Valley National Park** – On January 8th, the park formally broke ground for a new \$6 million state-of-the-art visitor center. The center is being developed in a historic two-story, 3,600-square-foot building that once served as a store and provided housing for workers of a nearby mill. It’s scheduled to open in May, 2019. [Full story](#).

CPANP Member Notices

This section has been created to capture short notes from members to their colleagues across the country. Send submissions to BHalainen@gmail.com.

- **41st Intake Class** – Tom Bradley and Linda Martin are curious as to how member of their intake class from the early 1970s. If you were in that class and would like to be included in a new roster, please contact either Tom (thosbrad@gmail.com) or Linda (linda115martin@gmail.com). A get-together is also being contemplated.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to several members for sending along items for this issue, including Jake Hoogland, Dennis Burnett, Carl Christensen, Deb Liggett, and Cathy Halainen.

If you see something that might be of interest to Coalition members, send it to Bill Halainen at the Weekly National Park System Report: BHalainen@gmail.com. Please don't submit them via his personal email address or Facebook page.

A Closing Observation

"The biggest problem [we've faced] has been, and will continue to be, convincing the public of the need for sound management, protection and preservation [of the parks]. But I believe in complete openness before the public. If we fail to make Americans aware of the problems facing the national parks, and to involve them in choosing the right solutions to these problems, then we are failing in our responsibility as stewards of these public lands."

[Director Russ Dickenson \(1980-1985\)](#)

* * * * *

The *Weekly National Park System Report* is a publication of The Coalition To Protect America's National Parks. It is prepared by Coalition member Bill Halainen, former editor of the *NPS Morning Report*, and produced and disseminated by Coalition member Steve Pittleman.

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 the coalition. Any current, retired or former salaried (GS, wage grade, seasonal, temporary, or SES) employee of the National Park Service can join the Coalition. For more information, click on [this link](#).

--- ### ---