



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

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Incidents

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park Kilauea Eruption Continues, Park Remains Closed

The eruption of Kilauea Volcano that began on May 3rd continues. Approximately two-thirds of the park is currently closed due to hazardous and increased earthquakes, corrosive ashfall, and an expected steam explosion at the volcano's summit. The park will reopen closed areas only when it is safe to do so. The park has posted [a map of the closed area](#) to its webpage.

Intermittent ash plumes and dangerous debris are being ejected from Halema'uma'u Crater. If a steam explosion occurs similar to what happened in 1924, the resulting rock and ash fall will be very hazardous. The radius of direct ash fall is around two miles, which includes the Jaggar Museum overlook and areas on Highway 11 within the park boundaries.

The National Park Service and Hawai'i Department of Transportation are working together to prepare the Chain of Craters-Kalapana Road as an evacuation route if Highway 130 is cut off by the Kilauea eruption. Work started May 30th to remove a seven-tenths-of-a-mile section of solidified lava from the 2016-2017 lava flow that covers the road. The gravel route will be for evacuation purposes only, and will not be an alternate route for travel to and from the Kalapana area.

Since tourism provides 30 percent of the private sector jobs on the Big Island, concern has grown over the potential of a long-term hit on the island's economy. According to an NPS economist, the impact that the park's closure will have on the local economy is best determined by breaking down the annual amount that Hawaii Volcanoes brings into the economy (\$166 million in 2017) into a daily average (\$455,000 per day) and multiplying that figure by the number of days the park has been closed. As of May 28th, that worked out to \$7.3 million.

For more information, go to the following sites:

- Hawaii Volcanoes NP – <https://www.nps.gov/havo/index.htm>
- Hawaiian Volcano Observatory (HVO) – <https://volcanoes.usgs.gov/observatories/hvo/>
- HVO webcams – https://volcanoes.usgs.gov/volcanoes/kilauea/multimedia_webcams.html
- HVO photos/videos – https://volcanoes.usgs.gov/volcanoes/kilauea/multimedia_chronology.html
- HVO maps – https://volcanoes.usgs.gov/volcanoes/kilauea/multimedia_maps.html

Sources: [New York Times](#), [Hawaii Volcanoes NP](#).

Blue Ridge Parkway Several Areas Of Park Closed Due To Storm Damage

Several areas of the park were closed after Subtropical Storm Alberto left standing water in picnic areas, fallen trees on roads, and nearby rivers at "dangerously high levels."

Chief among the closures was a section of parkway between Asheville and Mount Mitchell State Park, where debris and fallen trees blocked the road. Hiking trails have also been impacted, including the Tanawha Trail, which is closed over Boone Fork Creek because of a damaged bridge.

The heavy rains associated with Alberto came on the heels of another extended wet period in the mountains that was blamed for closing the Linn Cove Viaduct. The rains associated with Alberto will keep it closed a little longer.

The National Weather Service reported last Friday that rains in the Asheville area set a monthly record of 14.68 inches in May. That's an inch over the previous record of 13.75 inches, set in the 1940s. Some areas in western North Carolina got nearly 8 inches of rain over a 24 hour period this week.

Source: [Charlotte Observer](#).

Yosemite National Park Two Climbers Killed In Fall From El Capitan

Two climbers – Jason Wells, 46, of Boulder, Colorado, and Tim Klien, 42, from Palmdale, California – were killed in a fall from the Free Blast route on El Capitan on Saturday, June 2nd.

Rangers received numerous 911 calls reporting the incident around 8 a.m. that morning.

This investigation is ongoing and no further details are available at this time.

Source: [Yosemite NP](#).

San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park Man Who Illegally Anchored In Park Sentenced

Bryan Pennington, 52, a yachtsman who illegally anchored his trimaran in the park's Aquatic Park Cove on several occasions, has been ordered by a federal judge to not sail any boat of any kind into the cove over the next five years.

Pennington was found guilty on three misdemeanor counts of anchoring his boat without a permit for a total of 83 nights between September and April. The judge sentenced him to five years of probation and made the order to keep out of the cove a condition of probation. She also ordered him not to violate any federal or state laws during the five years.

Federal regulations for the cove require a permit for overnight anchoring and limits of five nights at a time and 30 nights per year. The misdemeanors carried a possible sentence of up to six months in jail, but federal prosecutors told the judge that their main concern was keeping Pennington out of the cove in the future for reasons of public safety. They said in a sentencing brief that Pennington endangered swimmers and historic vessels managed by the maritime park, threatened National Park Service employees, and probably fouled the waters of the cove because the trimaran lacked operable plumbing.

Pennington has also been charged in San Francisco Superior Court with a misdemeanor for threatening National Park Service employees. A Superior Court judge ordered him to stay away from the lands and waters of Aquatic Park until his trial on May 21st. Federal prosecutors said Pennington was arrested on May 3rd on suspicion of violating that order by appearing on the shoreline bleachers of the park and is now additionally charged with contempt of court.

Pennington's boat is now chained to a dock at the Hyde Street Harbor. He owes more than \$5,000 in fees to the Port of San Francisco and proceedings for a lien sale of the trimaran have begun.

Source: [Bay City News](#).

Yosemite National Park Hiker Dies In Fall From Half Dome

A hiker fell from the Half Dome cables on the afternoon of Monday, May 21st. He was on the Half Dome cables with another person during a thunderstorm when he slipped and fell.

Rangers were notified of the fall. They soon arrived on scene and provided assistance to the second hiker.

This was the first fatality on the Half Dome cables since 2011 and first visitor fatality in the park this year.

Source: [Yosemite NP](#).

Zion National Park Vandal Discovered Via Social Media

A man alleged to be responsible for writing on a rock face at Angel's Landing in permanent marker is facing criminal and civil penalties after having left information that led other visitors and park officials to him on the internet.

"The social media backlash for the perpetrator's action has been swift and severe, prompting him to admit to the wrong-doing and cooperate fully with the on-going investigation," the National Park Service said in a news release.

The graffiti came to light on social media after photographer Joe Braun posted a photo of the vandalism on his Facebook page, expressing his frustration with the act.

The graffiti was found on the popular Angels Landing hike on a viewing area off the trail, Braun said, adding that there was more graffiti nearby.

Source: [St. George News](#).

Hot Springs National Park Man Arrested For Facebook Threat To Shoot Rangers

On April 27th, a ranger attempted to contact Brently Green, 29, who was running on a park trail with two unrestrained dogs, which is a federal violation. Green ignored the ranger's commands to stop and fled the area. The ranger pursued him to his home, where he issued Green citations for the unrestrained dog violation as well as fleeing.

Three days later, it was found that Green has posted threatening messages on his Facebook page. The threatening messages were directed at Hot Springs rangers and indicated that Green would carry a pistol on future trail runs and would shoot rangers.

A warrant for terroristic threatening was issued. Green was arrested on May 14th and transported to the Garland County Detention Center. His bond was set at \$100,000.

Source: [KHTV](#).

Redwood National and State Parks Burl Poacher Arrested On Multiple Charges

Rangers on patrol this past January discovered an old-growth redwood with massive chunks cut out from its base. During the ensuing investigation, rangers identified a suspect – Derek Hughes, 35 – in the nearby town of Orick, California, and were able to obtain enough information during the investigation to obtain a search warrant for his residence.

On March 27th, rangers served the warrant on Hughes. They found several pieces of old-growth redwood that matched those cut from the tree and also discovered methamphetamine, drug paraphernalia, illegal weapons and various items of stolen property.

Hughes was charged with vandalism, receiving stolen property, grand theft, possession of metal knuckles, possession of methamphetamine, and possession of paraphernalia. They subsequently confirmed that the redwood sections came from the tree with the cuts.

[Burl](#) poaching involves the cutting of burls from both live and dead trees, felling of living old-growth redwood trees to access burls from higher up the stem, and the cutting of down logs for ornamental furniture, veneer, and souvenirs. This uncontrolled and illegitimate harvesting of burls directly threatens individual old-growth redwoods, and also impacts the surrounding ecosystem, threatened and endangered species, and the parks' scenic values.

Source: [Eureka Times-Standard](#).

Natchez Trace Parkway Driver Who Struck Bicyclist Pleads Guilty

A federal judge has accepted a plea agreement from a man who hit a cyclist on the parkway last July.

Marshall Neely pleaded guilty to all three counts with which he'd been charged – reckless aggravated assault, lying to a federal agent, and obstruction of justice. Neely agreed to accept a 10-month prison sentence, which would be followed by three years of supervised release. He would also have to pay \$1,210 in restitution to the cyclist he hit.

Neely and his family received threatening messages after the video of the crash went up online. Bumper stickers and his license plate number identified him to online users, so Neely removed the stickers from his vehicle.

Officers who arrived at Neely's house after the accident found him unconscious on the floor. He later admitted that he'd been driving on the parkway earlier in the day and claimed that someone threw a bicycle at his car.

Source: [Nashville Tennessean](#).

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area Woman Dies In Fall Into Lake Powell

An Arizona woman died on May 22nd after falling off a Chains area cliff into Lake Powell.

Malesta Littleman, 36, of Lechee, Arizona, was pulled out of the water by visitors in a nearby boat. Park rangers and officers from the Page Police Department responded to a 911 call about 12:10 p.m. When they arrived, they transferred Littleman to a National Park Service vessel and performed life-saving measures on her as they transported her to the Wahweap dock.

The Page Fire Department continued life-saving measures until the patient was taken by helicopter to Banner Page Hospital.

The circumstances surrounding the death are under investigation.

Source: [Deseret News](#).

Joshua Tree National Park Seriously Injured Hiker Rescued By Searchers

A New Zealand tramper (hiker) was found and rescued by searchers on May 26th.

Claire Nelson, 36, had intended to hike to the park's Lost Palms Oasis. She told a friend about her plans, but failed to return as scheduled on Wednesday, May 23rd, and was reported missing two days later. Her vehicle was found in the parking lot at the Lost Palms Oasis/Mastodon Peak trailhead.

Searchers began a search and found Nelson, who was suffering from a shattered pelvis, after she was able to make a distress signal that was seen by a helicopter crew.

She was flown to hospital for treatment.

Source: [Radio New Zealand](#).

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center No Large Fires Currently Burning In NPS Areas

Synopsis

NIFC is at PL 2. One new large fire was reported and contained in northern California on Monday. Two large fires in New Mexico remain the country's top priority wildfires. Firefighters are currently working to suppress a total of eight large fires that have so far burned over 30,000 acres.

National Park Service Fires

No large fires are being reported in NPS areas.

Active Incident Resource Commitments

Category	May 14th	May 21st	June 5th
Area Command Teams	0	0	0
NIMO Teams	0	0	0
Type 1 Teams	1	0	1
Type 2 Teams	1	0	3
Crews	33	7	78
Engines	133	33	193
Helicopters	24	4	36
Total FF/Overhead	1,686	444	3,248

Fires/Acreage

Category	2018 Total	2007-2017 Ave	2018 Variance
Year-to-Date Fires	23,984	25,115	- 1,131
Year-to-Date Acres	1,665,736	1,242,358	+ 423,378

Sources: [National Interagency Fire Center](#).

News From Around Washington

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

National Park Service Washington Office
Memo Issued On Temporary Seasonal Appointments

In mid-May, a memo was sent out from Deputy Director Smith (acting as director) to all NPS employees entitled "Impacts On Temporary Seasonal Appointments." The full text follows:

"I want to call your attention to the attached memorandum [a PDF file that is **not** attached to this newsletter] that will change the way the National Park Service (NPS) has historically brought back seasonal employees on a non-competitive basis.

"For the past five months, the National Park Service's Workforce and Inclusion directorate has worked with the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to find a way to resolve differing interpretations of OPM's regulations on how the NPS has used non-competitive rehire authority to bring seasonal staff on board year after year. This is one part of the more than two-year effort to formally respond to OPM's audit of the NPS hiring and human resources practices.

"OPM states that in order to qualify for non-competitive rehire eligibility, an employee must work no more than 1,039 hours (less than six months) at a single unit or multiple units combined within the NPS as a bureau, which is how OPM defines a major subdivision. The NPS had traditionally defined major subdivisions at the park level, and the DOI issued a personnel bulletin last year that defined major subdivisions at the regional level. Following multiple appeals, and notwithstanding how other federal agencies and departments bring back seasonal employees on a non-competitive basis, the NPS and the DOI must now move forward in using OPM's definition. This will be effective May 26, 2018, when the DOI will rescind its current personnel bulletin on this issue.

"I know this news will come as a disappointment to many within the NPS. There will be impacts to some of our seasonal employees, people we rely on to make our parks better places for visitors during our busiest times. There will also be impacts to parks, which have used this authority to develop seasonal employees with deep experience and knowledge about the resources and on-the-ground needs for park operations. We will make the necessary operational changes in order to achieve our mission and be in full compliance with regulatory requirements.

"I want you to know our staff in Washington worked tirelessly to come to a better resolution, but at the end of the day, this is what we have to do in order to comply with the OPM regulations and retain our delegated hiring authority.

"I request your assistance and ask that you reach out to seasonal employees whom you know to ensure they are made aware of this change so they can make plans accordingly. For our seasonal employees who have exceeded their 1,039 hours, this means they will need to apply for positions they have held during many previous seasons. Through competitive selection, an employee is able to re-establish their non-competitive rehire eligibility in future years as long as they do not exceed 1,039 hours in a service year, as noted in the attached guidance. We want to be sure we can answer their questions and help them plan ahead.

"The attached memorandum includes many additional details. The Associate Director for Workforce and Inclusion will continue to work with Servicing Human Resources Offices to ensure that this new guidance is issued and implemented consistently across the country.

"We will continue to work to identify opportunities to use additional workforce flexibilities on behalf of employees in a manner consistent with the Secretary's priority of building a DOI workforce for the next 100 years. We will align these efforts with the goals of the President's Management Agenda to achieve agile operations and a 21st Century Workforce to better serve our visitors.

“Thank you for the work you do every day on behalf of the National Park Service and the American people.”

Capitol Hill Weekly Legislative Roundup

New Public Laws

Nothing to report.

Senate

On May 24th, the Senate passed H.R. 4910, to require the secretary of the interior to provide an outer burial receptacle , or grave liner, for each grave in an open national cemetery administered by the National Park Service, in a manner similar to those provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs to those buried in national cemeteries administered by the National Cemetery Administration. This bill also provides for the reimbursement of a veteran's survivors who provide a privately purchased outer burial receptacle for use in a National Park Service cemetery. The bill affects the only two remaining active cemeteries within the National Park System - Andersonville National Cemetery in Georgia, and Andrew Johnson National Cemetery in Tennessee. The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law.

The Senate was in recess for the Memorial Day week of May 28th to June 1st.

House

On May 22nd, the Committee on Appropriations postponed the markup of the FY 2019 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. As of the time of this report, the markup has not been rescheduled.

On May 22nd, the Committee on Natural Resources' Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing, among other bills, on H.R. 5751, to redesignate the Golden Spike National Historic Site as the Golden Spike National Historical Park, and to establish within the National Park Service, a program to be known as the Transcontinental Railroad Network, which shall consist of all units and programs of the National Park Service that are determined by the secretary to relate to the history, construction, and legacy of the transcontinental railroad and other federal, state, local, and privately-owned properties that have a verifiable connection to the history, construction, and legacy of the transcontinental railroad. The network would also produce and disseminate appropriate education materials relating to the history, construction, and legacy of the transcontinental railroad, and be authorized to enter into appropriate cooperative agreements and memoranda of understanding to provide technical assistance to related properties, and to create and adopt an official, uniform symbol or device for the network.

On May 24th, the House passed H.R. 5515, the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2019. Among other provisions, the bill includes the following:

- Section 342, to amend the boundary of Shiloh National Military Park to include the Fallen Timbers, Russell House, and Davis Bridge battlefields, and to establish the Parker's Crossroads Battlefield as an affiliated area of the national park system.
- Section 1076, to extend the authorization of appropriations for the National Aviation Heritage Area in Ohio through September 30, 2025.
- Section 2832, to designate one acre of land, the Mormon Peak Microwave Facility, within Death Valley National Park, as potential wilderness.

The sections listed above were in the version of the bill brought up for debate in the full House. There were numerous amendments adopted by the House during the floor debate; however, the final version of H.R. 5515 as passed by the House was unavailable in time for this report. Additional provisions affecting the National Park Service might be found when the final version is printed. The adopted

amendments might also change the section numbers listed above. Further information will be provided in a future report when the amended bill is published.

The House was in recess for the Memorial Day week of May 28th to June 1st.

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

Park People, Friends and Allies

Washington Office

Bob Vogel Named Southeast Regional Director

Bob Vogel, currently the regional director for National Capital Region, will be moving to Atlanta and taking over as regional director for Southeast Region.

During his tenure leading the National Capital Region, Vogel helped secure funding for the complete \$227 million rehabilitation of Arlington Memorial Bridge, created business efficiencies in the regional office, and emphasized employee development and well-being by supporting a regional workforce advisory group, creating a Civil Rights internship program, signing a new collective bargaining agreement, and leading the region's response to sexual harassment. Recently he served in a temporary capacity as the NPS deputy director for operations.

Prior to his tenure at the National Capital Region, Vogel was the superintendent of the National Mall and Memorial Parks for three and a half years.

Prior to that, he served as the deputy superintendent for Grand Teton National Park, superintendent at Cape Lookout National Seashore, superintendent at Guilford Courthouse National Military Park, chief of visitor services at Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site and Johnstown Flood National Memorial, and Fort Frederica National Monument. Before taking over at Fort Frederica, he was assistant chief of interpretation at Bryce Canyon National Park. He began his NPS career as a seasonal park interpreter at Ozark National Scenic Riverways.

Vogel is a native of Cape Girardeau, Missouri, and is a graduate of the University of Tennessee with a bachelor of science degree in natural resource management. Vogel and his wife, Janice, who met at Fort Frederica, have one adult daughter, Sara.

Source: [Office of Communications](#).

Yellowstone National Park

Superintendent Dan Wenk To Retire

Superintendent Dan Wenk has announced his decision to retire on March 30, 2019. At that time, Wenk will have more than 43 years of public service dedicated to the national park system.

"I've had an amazing career with the National Park Service," said Wenk. "It is an honor and a privilege to preserve national park resources and provide incredible visitor experiences, and I'm not done yet. I'm in the midst of several important projects that I will finish before I depart to ensure the smoothest transition for Yellowstone."

Over the course of Wenk's remaining time as superintendent, his areas of focus will be implementing the bison quarantine program by sending live animals to the tribes at Fort Peck, collecting data and developing community support for the long-term visitor use management planning effort, negotiating concessions contracts, managing transboundary wildlife issues, and working with park staff to improve workplace culture.

Wenk served as deputy director of operations for the National Park Service in Washington D.C. from 2007 through 2011. He served as acting director of the National Park Service for nine months in 2009.

In these national roles, Wenk received the Department of the Interior Secretary's Executive Leadership Award and the Presidential Rank Award.

Wenk began his career with the National Park Service as a landscape architect in 1975. He was named superintendent of Mount Rushmore National Memorial in 1985, where he served for 16 years. In 2001, he was appointed director of Denver Service Center.

Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#).

Jewel Cave National Park Michelle Wheatley Chosen To Be New Superintendent

Michelle Wheatley has been selected to serve as Jewel Cave National Park's new superintendent. She assumes her new role on July 8th.

For the past five years, Wheatley has served as superintendent of Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument. Under her leadership, the park developed an asset management program and addressed many complex deferred maintenance projects. She focused on strengthening the park's public outreach and relationships with the community.

Wheatley served as acting superintendent at Colorado National Monument and as acting superintendent at Grant Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site prior to becoming superintendent at Florissant Fossil Beds. She has also worked in Yellowstone and Rocky Mountain National Parks in a variety of visitor services positions.

Wheatley is a graduate of Colorado State University, where she earned a bachelor of science degree in recreation and business administration. She later received a graduate certificate in natural resources and environments from Colorado State University, Division of Continuing Education.

An avid hiker and skier, Wheatley is looking forward to exploring and learning more about the natural resources in the park and the Black Hills area along with her husband, Hal, and their two Australian Shepherds, Millie and Bobby.

Source: [Dakota Radio Group](#).

Coalition News and Activities

News and actions taken by CPANP on behalf of the National Park Service and National Park System, plus news about members of the Coalition:

Coalition Issues Statement On Proposed Hunting-Trapping Rule – On May 22nd, the Coalition issued a strong statement opposing the proposed new rule on hunting and trapping in national preserves in Alaska. The text follows:

“The Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks is appalled and dismayed to read the National Park Service proposed rule that would open national preserves in Alaska to a variety of unsportsmanlike hunting practices. A 2015 Final Rule codified Park Service prohibitions on certain hunting and trapping practices that are otherwise permitted by the State of Alaska. Now, under the direction of the Department of the Interior, the Park Service is proposing to eliminate ALL of the 2015 restrictions.

“On July 14, 2017, a Trump Administration official, Acting Assistant Secretary of Fish and Wildlife and Parks Virginia Johnson, sent the Acting Director of the National Park Service an internal memorandum ‘directing the National Park Service to initiate a [new] rulemaking process to reconsider the [2015] rule.’

“If approved, the new rule would allow following practices: Taking any black bear, including cubs and sows with cubs, with artificial light at den sites; harvesting brown bears over bait; taking wolves and coyotes (including pups) during the denning season (between May 1 and August 9); taking swimming

caribou; taking caribou from motorboats under power; taking black bears over bait; and using dogs to hunt black bears.

“The proposed rule sounds nothing like the Park Service I know,’ said Phil Francis, Chair of the Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks and a retired Park Service veteran with over 40 years of experience with the agency. ‘Under the Organic Act of 1916, the National Park Service is mandated to conserve wildlife, not exploit it through these despicable hunting practices. You don’t have to be an avid hunter to know that killing bears with cubs in their dens or shooting swimming caribou from a moving motorboat are simply wrong.’”

The proposed rule is open to public comment until July 23rd; the *Federal Register* notice can be found [at this link](#). The memo directing the NPS to draft the proposed regulation can be found [at this link](#).

Source: [CPANP June Brief](#).

The *June Brief* also has articles on CPANP urging Secretary Zinke to renew the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, opposing the proposed Wyoming wolf hunt, and other topics. You can read it in its entirety [at this link](#).

News Reports and Releases

A brief summary of recent news stories, web postings and agency press releases pertaining to the federal government, the administration, DOI, the National Park Service, public lands and the climate and environment.

Government and Administration

The Administration Vs. The Administrators – The May 21st edition of *The New Yorker* has a feature story entitled “Only The Best People” and subtitled “Donald Trump’s war on the ‘deep state.’” By ‘deep state,’ he of course means the 2.8 million civilian employees of the 250 federal agencies. Trump’s strategy, says one retired Foreign Service employee, has been the classic approach used in the hostile takeover of a company – “you decapitate the leadership, you compartmentalize the power centers, you engender fear and suspicion.” She adds that they “did all those things.” A key to this approach was putting his own minions in leadership positions. Secretary Zinke gets particular attention. Writes author Evan Osnos: “I spoke to dozens of men and women throughout the federal government about Trump’s war on Washington. None of them described a more abrupt change than the civil servants at the Department of the Interior...” The article goes on to list all the reasons why Zinke has earned their disfavor, most of which have appeared in this newsletter. Osnos concludes the article with this observation: “Bit by bit, the White House is becoming Trump’s Emerald City: isolated, fortified against nonbelievers, entranced by its mythmaker, and constantly vulnerable to the risks of revelation.”

Source: [The New Yorker](#).

Zinke Says He Plans To ‘Pivot’ To Conservation – Following a well-documented first year at DOI in which he proved to be anything but a conservationist, the *Huffington Post* reports that Secretary Zinke has said that he’s going to change course: “Now, after a tumultuous first year at the Interior helm, Zinke appears to be signaling a new direction. [Last] month, he hosted a roundtable of more than two dozen outdoor sporting and conservation organizations to get their input on his planned reorganization of the department. He promised them a ‘grand pivot’ away from energy development and toward species and habitat conservation...” According to one attendee, “the secretary acknowledged that energy was the major push in 2017 and declared that the next few years would be about conservation, departmental reorganization and tackling the maintenance backlog at national parks.” Source: [Huffington Post](#).

National Park System

Deputy Director Apologizes For Inappropriate Behavior – Back in January, an employee anonymously complained to DOI that he or she witnessed Deputy Director Dan Smith grabbing his own genitalia in a hallway at the Interior headquarters in January, saying that he then acted out urinating on the wall. The complaint was investigated by the IG; although the IG’s findings haven’t been released, Smith last week apologized to NPS employees via a memorandum. In it, he says that the incident occurred as he was “recounting an experience in Alaska while having a hallway conversation...” He then offers his apology: “I want to start by apologizing to any colleague who witnessed this. I recognize that the story was inappropriate for the workplace, even though it does not rise to the level of harassment. I am very sorry for my mistake in telling this story and any discomfort it clearly caused. I also want to apologize to each of you. As a leader, I must hold myself to the highest standard of behavior in the workplace. I take my responsibility to create and maintain a respectful, collegial work environment very seriously. Moving forward, I promise to do better. I hope that my mistake and this apology are a lesson for leaders and employees at every level of the National Park Service. Workplace culture is our shared responsibility. We must conduct ourselves in a manner that reflects the great pride we all have for the extraordinary parks and programs we represent.” Source: Memorandum, “A Heartfelt Apology”

Dozens Of Parks At Risk Under Offshore Drilling Plan – Conservation organization *Our Daily Planet* posted a story on May 25th on a new study that shows that the administration’s offshore drilling plan will present a serious threat to many parks: “Nearly 70 National Parks and hundreds more state and local ones could be in jeopardy of oil spills and other industrial impacts and marred views if the Trump Administration’s plan for oil and gas drilling all around the country goes into effect. According to [a new study](#) by the Natural Resources Defense Council and the National Parks Conservation Association published this week, these parks had more than 84 million visits last year alone, and include some of our most iconic, ecologically important and historic national parks, including Everglades, Olympic, Acadia, and the Statue of Liberty National Monument.” The report points out that this isn’t just crying wolf, as three major oil spills have caused serious damage to parks over the last 50 years – the Santa Barbara spill in 1969, the *Exxon Valdez* spill in 1989, and the *Deepwater Horizon* spill in 2010. “If the administration’s offshore drilling proposal goes forward, 47 lease sales would occur from 2019 to 2024, including 19 sales off the coast of Alaska, seven in the Pacific region, 12 in the Gulf of Mexico and nine in the Atlantic region.” Source: [Our Daily Planet](#).

Around The Parks – Brief reports on parks, culled either from park press releases or from newspapers:

- *Alaska Region* – The proposed new regulation on hunting and trapping in national preserves in Alaska (see “Coalition News and Activities” above) has drawn considerable heat. On May 23rd, CNN ran a story on opposition to the regulation: “The Interior Department moved this week to end an Obama administration ban on hunting bears in Alaska with bait, artificial light and dogs, along with other hunting practices in the state. The proposal from the National Park Service, published in the Federal Register on Tuesday, took issue with protections for black bears, ‘including cubs and sows with cubs,’ as well as wolves and coyotes, including their pups, from ‘harvest practices that are otherwise permitted by the State of Alaska.’” It goes on to quote the Humane Society, which will be among those organizations fighting the change. Source: [CNN](#).
- *Western Regional Office* – Staff at the regional office were told last week that the office will move out of the Financial District building it has been in since 2011. About 150 people work in the regional office’s current space at 333 Bush Street, where the rent is \$2 million a year. The 10-year lease on the space ends in 2021. The NPS plans to move the office to a vacant building that the Service owns at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site. Source: [KQED News](#).
- *Death Valley NP* – The park has entered into a contract with Peaceful Valley Donkey Rescue, a Texas-based nonprofit, to round up and remove up to 2,500 wild burros from the park. Starting later this month, Peaceful Valley will lure the animals with food and water or drive them with wranglers on horseback into temporary pens. The burros will then be trucked out of the park to training centers to be prepped for adoption. Peaceful Valley also plans to remove up to 2,500 wild burros from nearby Mojave National Preserve in California under the same five-

year contract. The operation is being paid for with private donations and grants to the group.
Source: [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#).

- *Great Smoky Mountains NP* – A lawsuit for \$13.5 million has been filed against the NPS by a man who lost his wife and two daughters in the 2016 Chimney Top 2 Fire. He claims that the Service was negligent in its efforts to contain the fire, which claimed 14 lives, injured 191 and damaged or destroyed 2,500 homes, buildings and other structures. The lawsuit alleges six claims for relief: Failure to monitor; failure to comply with command structure requirements; failure to adhere to mandatory fire management policies and requirements; failure to warn; wrongful death; and loss of society and consortium. The lawsuit also lists 11 violations of mandated requirements. Source: [WATE News](#).
- *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* – The National Park Service has reached an agreement with a nonprofit veterans' organization to take custody of cremated remains left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and bury them with honors at a private in-ground vault in Virginia. The Missing in America Project will take possession of the 80 sets of cremains that have been left at the memorial through the years, as well as any future cremains that are left. They will be inurned with full military honors at an in-ground vault at a private cemetery in Manassas. Source: [Washington Post](#).
- *USS Arizona Memorial* – Boat transportation to the *Arizona* was suspended on May 6th after one of the vessel operators noticed a crack on the outside of the memorial. Tourists were allowed to disembark at the memorial after crews completed interim repairs, but the cracks reappeared hours later, indicating a more serious issue. It was found that the structure was not supporting the loading ramp as it was designed to do; the memorial has therefore been closed indefinitely until the problem can be fixed. Source: [Los Angeles Times](#).
- *George Washington Memorial Parkway* – This summer, the park will begin preparing Arlington Memorial Bridge for a complete rehabilitation that will commence in the fall. Work this summer will prepare the bridge to support construction equipment and traffic until its rehabilitation is finished in 2021. Source: [George Washington MP](#).
- *Grand Teton NP* – A teenager at Jackson Hole High School has come up with an innovative way to warn motorists of elk at night. He developed two life-sized elk silhouettes covered in reflective material that shine brightly when illuminated by headlights. They've been installed along Highway 26/89/191 at the park's south entrance, where elk commonly cross the road. The story includes a photo of the sign at night. Source: [Jackson Hole News and Guide](#).

Public Comments Solicited – A listing of planned actions in parks open to public comment, arranged in chronological order by their closing dates. New entries are in **dark red**:

- *Grand Teton Invasive Vegetation Management Plan* – The park is developing an invasive vegetation management plan and environmental assessment. The intent of the plan is to improve the park's current invasive plant management efforts through a more integrated approach, including prevention, control and restoration. Closes: June 8th. [PEPC link](#).
- *Big Bend Backcountry Management Plan Update* – The park is updating its 1995 backcountry management plan, which directs park management on wilderness and backcountry use topics, including backpacking, primitive car camping, backcountry use limits, and other considerations. Closes: June 18th. [PEPC link](#).
- *Acadia Draft Transportation Plan and EIS* – The NPS invites the public to provide feedback on the range of management alternatives and potential environmental impacts identified in the Draft Transportation Plan and EIS. Closes: June 26th. [PEPC link](#).
- *Hunting and Trapping in National Preserves in Alaska* – An NPS-proposed rulemaking entitled “Alaska; Hunting and Trapping in National Preserves” was posted in the May 22nd edition of

the Federal Register. Here's the synopsis: "The National Park Service proposes to amend its regulations for sport hunting and trapping in national preserves in Alaska. This proposed rule would remove a regulatory provision issued by the National Park Service in 2015 that prohibited certain sport hunting practices that are otherwise permitted by the State of Alaska. These proposed changes are consistent with Secretary of the Interior Orders 3347 and 3356." The notice provides background information on the proposed revision and details on the changes that will be made to 36 CFR 13.42. Closes: July 23rd. [Federal Register link](#).

Public Lands and Land Management Agencies

New Video On Women In Wildland Firefighting – Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI) and The National Forest Foundation have developed and posted a video on women in wildland firefighting entitled "[Women In Fire](#)" on the REI webpage. It's about eight minutes long and worth your time. Source: [REI](#).

Companies Begin Exploring Drilling In Arctic NWR – "Two Alaska Native corporations and a small oil services firm together have applied to do extensive seismic work next winter in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge," reports the *Washington Post*, "[which will constitute] the first move toward development there since Congress voted late last year to open up the pristine wilderness to oil and gas drilling." FWS found their initial application woefully inadequate, though, so they have a ways yet to go. Source: [Washington Post](#).

Teenager Ordered To Pay \$37 Million For Starting Wildfire – The Associated Press reports that the teenager who started a major wildfire in the scenic Columbia River Gorge in Oregon "has been ordered to pay restitution for at least the next decade, though it's unlikely the boy will ever cover his nearly \$37 million bill." The sum will cover the costs of firefighting, repair and restoration to the gorge and damage to homes. Victims include the U.S. Forest Service and Oregon Department of Transportation. The boy started the blaze accidentally with fireworks. He's been directed to set up a payment plan, "though payments can be halted after 10 years as long as he complies, completes probation and doesn't commit other crimes." One commenter has figured out that it'd take 855,000 shifts at McDonald's to pay off the debit. Source: [Associated Press](#).

Wildlife and Conservation

Wyoming Grizzly Bear Hunt – The Wyoming Game and Fish Commission has approved the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's proposed grizzly hunting rule, with modest revisions supposedly based on public input. Executive Council member Mike Murray had this to say about the decision: "The decision is disappointing, but not surprising. In the final approved rule, it looks like they've lowered the quota/limit of females that can be taken in the Demographic Monitoring Area (DMA) from two to one. The DMA is the area of suitable habitat within which the GYE population is annually surveyed and estimated and within which the total mortality limits will apply. And according to the WGFD press release: 'Parts of this approved plan that were based on public input include: mandatory education for grizzly bear hunters, hunt areas and regulations to direct harvest to areas with higher potential for grizzly bear/human conflicts, a closed portion of a hunt area next to Grand Teton National Park to support the wildlife viewing tourism economy and a prohibition against hunting grizzly bears near highways.'" More can be found in [this WGFD news story](#). Source: Mike Murray.

Idaho Grizzly Bear Hunt – Reuters, the international news service, reports that Idaho has approved the first grizzly bear hunt in the state in 43 years, "a decision denounced by conservationists waging a court battle to restore protections for grizzlies in and around Yellowstone National Park." According to a state spokesman, "Yellowstone area bears have been recovered for years and hunting is part of a conservation strategy that can be used to manage their numbers." Source: [Reuters](#).

Climate and The Environment

NOAA Issues Hurricane Season Forecast – Because the NPS has so many coastal and near-coastal areas, NOAA's estimate of the kind of hurricane season we're likely to have is of considerable

consequence. As always, the annual forecast was issued on June 1st. Here's the heart of it: "NOAA's Climate Prediction Center is forecasting a 75 percent chance that the 2018 Atlantic hurricane season will be near- or above-normal...NOAA's forecasters predict a 70-percent likelihood of 10 to 16 named storms (winds of 39 mph or higher), of which 5 to 9 could become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), including 1 to 4 major hurricanes (category 3, 4 or 5; with winds of 111 mph or higher). An average hurricane season produces 12 named storms, of which 6 become hurricanes, including 3 major hurricanes." For additional details, see their annual press release (link follows). Source: [National Hurricane Center](#).

Rio Grande Drying Up – The *New York Times* ran an article on May 24th on the diminishing flow in the Rio Grande – and in other western rivers. "With spring runoff about one-sixth of average and more than 90 percent of New Mexico in severe to exceptional drought, conditions [along the Rio Grande] are extreme. Even in wetter years long stretches of the riverbed eventually dry as water is diverted to farmers, but this year the drying began a couple of months earlier than usual. Some people are concerned that it may dry as far as Albuquerque, 75 miles north. But the state of the Rio Grande reflects a broader trend in the West, where warming temperatures are reducing snowpack and river flows. A study last year of the Colorado River, which provides water to 40 million people and is far bigger than the Rio Grande, found that flows from 2000 to 2014 were nearly 20 percent below the 20th century average, with about a third of the reduction attributable to human-caused warming. The study suggested that if climate change continued unabated, human-induced warming could eventually reduce Colorado flows by at least an additional one-third this century." The author of a report on the flows in the Colorado offered this comment about the two rivers: "Both of these rivers are poster children for what climate change is doing to the Southwest." Source: [New York Times](#).

From The Archives

This section contains news and incidents taken from *Morning Report* issues published during the corresponding week 25 years ago. This week we go back to the end of May and beginning of June, 1993. All entries appear in the original verb tense.

- *Yosemite National Park* – On the afternoon of May 18th, park dispatch received notification that a motor home was on fire in the Lower River campground. The campground supervisor, who was first on scene, reported that the vehicle was fully engulfed. Within five minutes of the first report, the heavily populated area was evacuated, a safe perimeter had been established, and traffic had been redirected to accommodate incoming concessioner and NPS fire engines. The fire was quickly controlled, but the vehicle was totally destroyed. Its owners, an elderly couple from Pacific Palisades, had gone out for a short bike ride, having left the vehicle after smelling an odor within it. Preliminary investigation indicates that the fire was probably caused by faulty wiring. The immediate response of park and concessioner firefighters saved surrounding vehicles, prevented injuries, and kept the fire from spreading to timber within the campground.
- *Olympic National Park* – Two women were rescued from the Skokomish River in the Staircase Subdistrict on the evening of May 28th. The women put in near the Staircase Campground bridge and planned to raft the two miles of the river from that point to the causeway bridge at the headwaters of Lake Cushman. Their boyfriends were to pick them up at the lake, but the two women failed to arrive at the appointed time. Just after 8 p.m., a ranger on patrol heard cries for help at a point between the two bridges and found the two women in the river. A rescue team consisting of five rangers and several members from the local fire district was able to get the two safely out of the river and up to the road by 11 p.m. They had been in the water for nearly 20 minutes before being rescued and were suffering from hypothermia; one of them also suffered a probable broken leg either when the raft flipped or when she was trying to untangle herself from it. The women were taken to a hospital and it appears that both will fully recover from the incident. Rivers at Olympic are currently flowing fast and cold due to snow melt-off and recent rains.
- *White Sands National Park* – Just before noon on May 27th, the park received a report that a 15-year-old girl was missing. She was reported to be barefoot and wearing a T-shirt, shorts

and a baseball cap; she had no water, and was overdue for medication for hyperactivity, without which she was subject to increased disorientation and agitation. She had last been seen heading north into the Heart of the Sands. A search was begun within minutes. The girl was spotted about a mile and a half north of the picnic area, but soon disappeared. Rangers found numerous tracks and followed them north; by 2 p.m., however, they could no longer track her, and summoned a helicopter. Rangers on board the Army helicopter which responded searched the northeast section of the park and found the girl just before 3 p.m. She was found approximately three miles north of her last seen location, but had walked an estimated eight to ten miles in an attempt to return to her group. She was very thirsty, disoriented and confused, but otherwise in good condition.

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- Production: Steve Pittleman
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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

“Conservation...involves advancing ideas that are ahead of their time, that make the status quo feel uncomfortable in the moment, but years in the future such foresighted thinking is never regretted by those benefitting from it. Wild nature, as we know it today, would not exist had earlier generations of young people not pushed public land managers and elected officials to see the light.”

[Dave Brower](#), cited in [Mountain Journal](#)

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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.”

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