



## The Coalition Weekly Report Wednesday, April 1, 2020

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### Incidents

#### **National Park System Coronavirus Response Update**

The coronavirus response remains the primary – and just about only – story being reported by media covering the national parks. Here are short excerpts from and links to some of them:

- *CV Guidelines for Parks* – “The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is expected to issue new guidelines aimed at preventing parks from becoming viral hotspots as the novel coronavirus continues to spread and Americans seek time outside as a break from staying at home. The National Park Service, as well as state and local recreation departments, have closed some parks or areas of parks to protect visitors and staff from coming in close contact with one another -- but in many national parks, outdoor spaces have remained open.” Source: Stephanie Ebbs, [ABC News](#).
- *Appeals Grow to Close Parks* – “The Trump administration is sticking with its crowd-friendly waiver of entrance fees at national parks during the coronavirus pandemic, as managers at some parks try and fail to keep visitors a safe distance apart and communities appeal for a shutdown at other parks that are still open. While the Interior Department agreed this week to requests from local managers of Yellowstone and some other iconic national parks to close, others remained open and newly free of charge. In Arizona, local governments and the Navajo Nation were waiting for an answer Thursday on their request earlier this week for federal officials to shut down Grand Canyon National Park as cases of the coronavirus grow in surrounding areas.” Source: Associated Press via [USA Today](#).
- *Senator Pushes For Closure Of All NPS Parks In California* – “U.S. Sen. Kamala Harris sent a letter to the U.S. Department of the Interior and National Park Service Thursday pushing for the closure of all 28 California national park units for the remainder of the COVID-19 state of emergency.” Source: Andy Krauss, [KRCC News](#).
- *Opposition To Keeping Parks Open And Waiving Fees* – “The Trump administration is urging Americans to head to national parks as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread. Many people are heading outdoors to seek a reprieve from being cooped up at home. But in Colorado and elsewhere, some fear that the sudden influx of visitors to national parks could put those parks and the public’s health at risk.” The article goes on to detail the broad opposition to these measures. Source: Allison Winter, [Colorado Independent](#).
- *Virtual Tours Of Five Parks* – “Google Arts & Culture has teamed up with five national parks in the U.S. so people can enjoy the beauty of the natural world while sitting safely on their couch.

These parks feature different climates and environments from across the country, including famous desert vistas and snowy terrains.” The parks are Kenai Fjords, Hawaii Volcanoes, Carlsbad Caverns, Bryce Canyon and Dry Tortugas – the article provides links to each of them. Source: Andrea Romano, [Travel and Leisure](#).

See also the Coalition’s response to the issue of allowing parks to remain open during the pandemic in the “Coalition Actions” section further on in this edition.

### **Zion NP**

#### **Man Caught BASE Jumping From Great White Throne**

A northern Utah man was cited for BASE jumping from the Great White Throne – a well-known monolith of white Navajo sandstone – last weekend.

The jumper and his two companions, all from the Salt Lake City area, were also cited for camping out of bounds and violating a raptor nesting closure.

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

### **Whiskeytown NRA**

#### **Hiker Rescued From Clear Creek**

Late on the afternoon of March 21st, a 22-year-old man who’d been hiking the Guardian Rock Trail was reported to have been swept down Clear Creek. He’d jumped in the creek after his dog fell into the water.

The dog was able to make it to shore, but the man was swept around a bend in the river. His companion later called 911. A multi-agency search ensued and he was soon found by Shasta firefighters and NPS rangers. He has recovered from his immersion in the creek’s cold waters.

Source: Whiskeytown NRA Facebook page.

### **National Park System**

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

Below are short follow-ups on incidents previously reported in this newsletter.

- *Carlsbad Caverns NP* – A few additional details have been released on the fatal shooting that occurred in the park in late March. A ranger saw a Ford F-250 truck being driven erratically near Rattlesnake Canyon and stopped it. The driver, later identified as Charles Lorentz of Colorado, got out of the truck and confronted the ranger. A fight ensued, during which Lorentz was fatally shot. The ranger was not injured. No further information is available. Source: [Albuquerque Journal](#).
- *Dinosaur NM* – You may recall two incident reports that appeared recently in this newsletter – one concerning the death of a snowmobiler at Dinosaur, the other recounting the rescue of a man who’d been searching for treasure from the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. It turns out that the two incidents are related, as the snowmobiler was searching for the same treasure. Some time ago, Forrest Fenn, an eccentric New Mexico antiquities dealer, announced that he had hidden about \$2 million somewhere in the Rocky Mountains, causing thousands to fan out across the region in efforts to find it. The man who died at Dinosaur was looking for the same treasure. The article at the following link also provides details on what happened. Source: [CBS News](#).

## **National Fire Situation**

### **National Interagency Fire Center**

## Six NIFC Overhead Teams Mobilized As Part Of CV Response

NIFC remains at PL 1.

Fire activity picked up in several states last week, with 45 new large fires reported in 12 states. Firefighters reached containment goals on 42 large fires.

As of last Friday, the following teams had been mobilized to deal with the coronavirus outbreak:

- Three area command teams – Team 1 (Stutler), Team 2 (Sexton) and Team 3 (Jalbert) – along with IMT2 (EA Silver Team) have been assigned by the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group to develop a national COVID19 wildland fire response plan.
- NIMO (Day) has been assigned to Forest Service Region 5 COVID-19 support.
- NIMO (Houseman) has been assigned to COVID-19 support at Forest Service headquarters in Washington D.C.
- IMT1 (NW Team 2) has been assigned to the Washington State EOC, providing complexity analysis, risk assessments and short/long-term planning guidance.
- IMT2 (NW Team 13) has been assigned to the Spokane Regional Health District, assisting with strategic planning and building capacity.

**Wildland Fire News** – Stories pertaining to wildland fire and fire-related activities that involved the NPS and its fellow agencies around the globe.

- *FEMA Activates ESF 4 (Firefighting)* – FEMA’s National Response Coordination Center and Regional Response Coordination Centers in several FEMA regions have activated [ESF #4](#) to coordinate requests for firefighting and incident management resources as part of the Federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the President’s March 13th declaration of a national emergency as well as an emergency under the Stafford Act, FEMA activated the NRCC and all RRCCs to assist the Department of Health and Human Services in providing an integrated federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The federal response is being guided by four mission priorities – shield the vulnerable, shelter the susceptible, save the sick, and protect hospital infrastructure and sustain supplies. Source: Emergency Support Function #4 Situation Report, via Dave Lattimore.
- *Covid Pandemic and Fire Season* – The chair of the Fire Management Board has issued a memorandum entitled “[Adjustments to Wildland Fire Preparedness Activities for the 2020 Fire Year in response to the Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) pandemic.](#)” The memorandum analyzes “the risk of responder exposure to the [virus] in relationship to the need to evaluate the medical, physical, and training requirements of wildland firefighters as part of annual fire management preparedness.” See the memo itself (above) for full details. Source: Dave Lattimore.

## Resource Commitment Trend

Category	March 13	March 20	March 27
Area Command Teams	0	0	3
NIMO Teams	0	0	2
Type 1 Teams	0	0	1
Type 2 Teams	0	0	1
Crews	8	1	1
Engines	112	38	6
Helicopters	2	4	0

Total FF/Overhead	475	187	22

### **Fires/Acreage**

Category	2010-2019 Ave	2020 Total	Difference
United States: YTD Fires	9,654	5,885	- 3,769
United States: YTD Acres	461,099	112,021	- 349,078

Sources: [NICC Incident Management Situation Report](#); [National Interagency Fire Center](#); [IMSR Archives](#); [InciWeb Incident Information System](#).

### **Congressional Actions**

Reports on legislation, upcoming hearings and new public laws of relevance to the national parks, prepared by Don Hellmann, former assistant director, legislative and Congressional affairs for the National Park Service.

#### **New Public Laws**

Nothing to report.

#### **Senate Actions**

**March 25** – The Senate passed [H.R. 748](#), the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, by a unanimous vote of 96 yeas. While there are several provisions that would affect the general public, there was only one provision that could affect the National Park Service. Title VII of Division B of H.R. 748, appropriates \$158,400,000 to the Office of the Secretary at the Department of the Interior to remain available until September 30, 2021, to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus, domestically or internationally, including, but not limited to, funds for purchasing equipment and supplies to disinfect and clean buildings and public areas, supporting law enforcement and emergency management operations, bio-surveillance of wildlife and environmental persistence studies, employee overtime and special pay expenses, and other response, mitigation, or recovery activities. It will be up to the secretary's office to determine the amount each of the bureaus within the department receive from this funding.

#### **House Actions**

**March 27** – The House agreed to the Senate amendment to [H.R. 748](#), the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, by voice vote. See Senate action on the bill, above, for further information. The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law.

### **National Park Service**

#### **Around The Parks**

Park reports are in alphabetical order. Included are proposals in the works for new areas or changes in designation for current NPS units.

- *Antietam NB* – A two-year project to renovate the park's visitors center and update its exhibits could begin this summer. A temporary modular building will be set up to serve as the visitors center, including restrooms, during the work. A lot of the work is about bringing the nearly 60-year-old building up to date. The visitors center was built in 1962 and has been added onto piecemeal over the years. The work includes expanding the front of the building a bit to create a larger lobby and building a small wing off one side so offices for the visitor center staff can be

moved out of the basement. The building's systems will be upgraded, including replacement of the electrical, heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems. The center also will be hooked up to the Sharpsburg sewer system so it won't have to keep relying on a septic system. Source: Julie Greene, [Hagerstown Herald-Mail](#).

- *Appalachian NST* – Warren Doyle, of Mountain City, Tennessee, who has hiked the entire 2,180-mile Appalachian Trail 18 times, will be inducted this spring into the Appalachian Trail Hall of Fame. Ignoring all the side trips involved in an AT thru-hike, that works out to as a total of more than 39,000 miles – an informal but remarkable record. Doyle also led eight group thru-hikes of the AT, seven of which saw a 100 percent completion rate among the hikers. See the article for Doyle's other contributions to the AT. Source: Marcus Schneck, [Pennlive.com](#).

### **Commenting On NPS Projects**

A listing of National Park Service projects – physical, paper and otherwise – which are currently open to public comment, plus due dates and URL's to related sites. Park/agency names for new entries are in **boldface**.

- *Everglades NP/Big Cypress NP* – The NPS has prepared an EA to evaluate the impacts of demolishing three hurricane-damaged houses at Everglades National Park and constructing one new four-plex housing unit within Big Cypress National Preserve. Comments can be submitted until April 7th at [the Everglades' PEPC webpage](#).
- *Glacier Bay NP&P* – The park's 1989 wilderness visitor use management plan will be updated this year. Comments will be taken until April 21st at [the park's PEPC webpage](#).

### **Climate and Conservation**

This section covers the myriad interconnected, conservation-related threats that are transforming the national parks, their ecosystems, and the world ecosphere, often simultaneously.

### **National and Worldwide Issues**

Reports on the national and international climate and conservation crisis.

- *Climate Change and Australian Fires* – The *New York Times* ran a story in February entitled “The End Of Australia As We Know It.” Here are the opening lines: “In a country where there has always been more space than people, where the land and wildlife are cherished like a Picasso, nature is closing in,” writes Damien Cave. “Fueled by climate change and the world's refusal to address it, the fires that have burned across Australia are not just destroying lives, or turning forests as large as nations into ashen moonscapes. They are also forcing Australians to imagine an entirely new way of life.” Cave cites an Australian filmmaker on climate change: “What was feared and what was warned is no longer in our future, a topic for debate — it is here,” she says. “We have seen the unfolding wings of climate change.” The article goes on to detail the many changes the fires have brought to Australian society. Source: Damien Cave, [New York Times](#).
- *WMO Warns Climate Efforts Are Falling Short* – “The world is significantly falling short when it comes to efforts to curb climate change, according to a new report released [on March 10th] by the World Meteorological Organization,” reports NBC News. “The intergovernmental organization's assessment evaluated a range of so-called global climate indicators in 2019, including land temperatures, ocean temperatures, greenhouse gas emissions, sea-level rise and melting ice. The report finds that most of these indicators are increasing, which means the planet is veering way off track in trying to control the pace of global warming.” You can find a copy of the report [at this link](#). Source: Denise Chow, [NBC News](#).

### **National Park System Issues**

**Climate Change** – News concerning the impacts of climate change on park lands, waters, species and other assets.

- *Canyonlands NP* – In February, *National Parks Traveler* ran an article entitled “How Climate Change Is Redesigning Canyonlands National Park.” It provides an overview of the many climate-related changes already being seen, particularly reduced flows, rockier rapids, channel narrowing and growing sandbars and flood plains. Because of the latter, the populations of tamarisk (exotic) and sandbar willow (native) are increasing. Desert plants are changing, especially juniper and pinyon pine. They aren’t regenerating, and a lot of pinyon pines are dying. The article also includes information on research underway to identify likely future changes in the canyon ecosystem. Source: Patrick Cone, [National Parks Traveler](#).
- *Glen Canyon NRA* – *National Parks Traveler* continued its series on the ways in which climate change is affecting the Colorado River with a segment on Glen Canyon. “[Years] of drought, upstream diversions and impoundments, and an overly optimistic forecast of Colorado River flows, have sapped the river once literally called Grand,” writes Patrick Cone. “Invasions of non-native species, and growing crowds of visitors, are contributing to the insults the river has struggled to bear, insults that only figure to worsen as climate change continues to squeeze the river from its headwaters in Rocky Mountain National Park down to the Gulf of California...[It] now seems certain that there will be major deficits in Colorado River flows in the future, with unintended consequences to downstream users, hydroelectric power, recreation, fish, wildlife, water quality, flood control and all water-dependent ecological systems along the entire river. It all depends on whether the weather and the climate continue to change as predicted. And that’s a problem for everyone.” Source: Patrick Cone, [National Parks Traveler](#).

**Native Flora and Fauna** – Recent news pertaining to the protection, propagation and advancement of species now or formerly native to the national parks:

- *Yellowstone NP* – Efforts to restore native Arctic grayling to the Missouri River headwaters within the park are moving slowly forward, reports *Hatch Magazine*. Native grayling, once abundant in the Gibbon, Firehole, Madison and Gallatin rivers (below Firehole and Gibbon falls), have been functionally extinct in the park since the 1930s. The article details the challenges – and successes – of the restoration process. Source: Chris Hunt, [Hatch Magazine](#).
- *Yellowstone NP* – The number of wolves in the park has risen in the past year, according to Doug Smith, the park’s senior wildlife biologist. Park officials believe there were 80 wolves in Yellowstone last year, as compared to 94 — living in eight separate packs — this year, Smith said during a live presentation on Facebook in early March. In 2003, Yellowstone had as many as 174 wolves, spread across 16 different packs. Source: Mark Davis, [Powell Tribune](#).

## **Coalition Actions**

Summary of recent developments within the Coalition, including some of the actions that CPANP took on your behalf. Links to specified documents are embedded in each entry.

- *Coronavirus In The Parks* – Members Joan Anzelmo, Mark Butler and Doug Morris [have commented on](#) CDC’s recommendations on social distancing and crowding in parks in, respectively, [High Country News](#), [USA Today](#) and [Backpacker](#). The Coalition also provided [a letter sent by an NPS employee](#) on employee anger at the parks being kept open to the [Washington Post](#).
- *Letter On Land And Ocean Conservation* – CPANP joined over 140 organizations in sending [a letter of support](#) for [S. Res. 372](#) and [H. Res. 835](#) “Thirty by Thirty Resolution to Save Nature.” These resolutions call on the federal government to establish a national goal of conserving at least 30 percent of the land and 30 percent of the ocean of the United States by 2030:

- *Protecting MBTA* – The Coalition signed on to two letters that oppose the Fish and Wildlife Service's proposed change to its Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) regulations – [one letter](#) sent by the Audubon Society and [the other letter](#) submitted by the Southern Environmental Law Center:
- *Freeze On Policy And Regulation Changes* – The Coalition signed on to [a letter](#) sent by over 90 organizations to DOI requesting the suspension of all public comment periods in recognition of the current national health emergency.

Source: Emily Thompson, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator.

## Park People

### **NPS Alumni Passing Of Frank Tanner**

Frank Tanner, 94, died on February 16th.

Frank served in the Navy during World War II. He married Sue Higley on June 23, 1943 and they raised four children.

Frank loved the outdoors and enjoyed hunting and fishing all of his life. That desire to be in the great outdoors led him into a long career with the National Park Service. He worked in Rocky Mountain and Kings Canyon National Parks as a maintenance foreman.

Following his retirement, they lived in Montrose during the winter and Gunnison through the summer for the remaining years of his life. Frank continued to enjoy the great outdoors, fishing and exploring mountain trails.

He is survived by his wife of 76 years, Sue H. Tanner of Montrose, Colorado. Frank is also survived by four children: Teri (Gary) Priddy of Katy, Texas; Frank “Brian”(Deborah) Tanner of Westminster, Colorado; Janne (Roger) Young of Arvada, Colorado; David (Robin) Tanner of San Diego, California; 17 grandchildren, 34 great-grandchildren; a sister Barbara Schneringer of Seattle, Washington; two nieces and one nephew.

Cremation has taken place and the family had a private memorial service.

Source: [Montrose Press](#).

## From The Archives

This section contains incidents taken from *Morning Report* issues published during the corresponding week (approximately) 25 years ago in 1995. All entries appear in the original verb tense; “submitters” are those people who originally submitted the incident report.

- *Little Bighorn Battlefield NM* – On February 2, 1992, the journal of a cavalry soldier killed at the Battle of the Little Bighorn was stolen from the visitor center museum during operating hours. The journal, which had a bullet hole in it because it had been carried in the soldier's breast pocket when he was shot, had a commercial value estimated at between \$75,000 and \$120,000. FBI and NPS agents have been tracking various leads for the past three years, and culminated the lengthy investigation with the arrest of Rodney Coronado in February. Coronado, a self-professed radical with membership in several activist environmental groups, confessed to stealing the artifact on a whim. He has also been charged with bombings and arson to whaling ships and animal experiment laboratories throughout the United States. In a plea agreement, Coronado admitted to stealing and burning the journal and pled guilty to an unrelated count of arson. Sentencing is pending. Submitted by Special Agent Pat Buccello.

- *Redwood N&SP* – On the morning of March 23rd, rangers were notified that four rafters were two days overdue from a rafting trip on Redwood Creek. A joint park-county-Coast Guard search was begun. Concern for the four was intensified when searchers learned of their combined inexperience, their lack of knowledge of the creek, and the unusually high water and deep snow in the area where they were floating. The four were spotted from a Coast Guard helicopter at noon the same day. The helicopter crew notified the NPS search party, whose members found the foursome and walked them out to the incident command post. All were treated for hypothermia, then released. Submitted by Chief Ranger Craig Johnson.
- *Bent's Old Fort NHS* – Dry lightning struck a point about 100 yards northeast of the reconstructed fort late on the afternoon of March 25th, causing a wildfire that spread rapidly to the north and east. Winds were erratic, causing some areas to reburn; they fire moved so quickly that standby observation by responding staff and local fire units was deemed most prudent. By nightfall, strong winds with rain pushed the fire past the fort south and east into cottonwoods and up to the Arkansas River. A plowed fire lane was constructed south of the fort by a local farmer to contain movement of the fire to the west. The wildfire burned about 70 acres in the wetland and was contained by about 10 pm. Snowfall during the night extinguished all but one smoke. A prescribed burn in this area two years ago reduced the fuel available for this fire. No structures or property were involved. Submitted by Don Hill.

## Acknowledgements

This newsletter comes to you through the efforts of a number of people:

- Production: Steve Pittleman
- Regular Correspondents: Don Hellmann, Dennis Burnett, Rick Smith, Emily Thompson, and Duncan Morrow
- Issue Contributors: Dave Lattimore, Bill Walters, Joan Anzelmo

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](mailto:BHalainen@gmail.com). Please don't submit them via his personal email address or Facebook page.

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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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