



The Coalition Weekly Report Wednesday, May 27, 2020

Volume 4

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Incidents

National Park System Coronavirus Response Update

News on national parks continues to focus mostly on the administration's response to the pandemic. Here's an assortment of stories from the last two weeks:

- *Washington Guidance* – On May 19th, WASO transmitted a 16-page document entitled “National Park Service COVID-19 Adaptive Operations Recovery Plan” to all field areas. Here are the introductory paragraphs: “The National Park Service COVID-19 Adaptive Operations Recovery Plan provides strategic direction and guidance to NPS offices to resume phased operations consistent with State guidance. The information in this Plan is consistent with the White House guidance and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)/Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies. Decisions on operations should occur at the local and regional level subject to consultation with NPS leadership, Field Special Assistants, and the Department of the Interior (DOI). Managers should generally align their actions in accordance with State guidance, in areas where States have begun reopening certain operations, access or opportunities without strict adherence to Federal gating criteria or Federal phases. The Plan informs and guides appropriate transitions from wide-scale restrictions and closures imposed to slow COVID-19 infections, to scalable operations that allow for routine office operations and public visitation that sustain communities and local economies, but do not compromise public and employee health and safety. This Plan provides an adaptive, decision-making framework to enable NPS managers to scale operations in a manner that best supports the visiting public under evolving recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), OMB/OPM, and State/local public health officials.” No link is available to the full document.
- *Wildlife ‘Take Over’ Parks* – *The Guardian* has an article entitled “[Wildlife Thrives In Closed US National Parks](#)” that reports on instances of wildlife “thriving on public lands since the coronavirus closures went into effect” – pronghorn around park headquarters at Death Valley; wildlife around buildings and along roadways in Rocky Mountain and Yellowstone; a quadrupling of bears in public places in Yosemite.
- *Return Of Visitors* – A few stories have been posted in the media about the return of visitors over the Memorial Day weekend. Although a public health emergency is in effect in Georgia, [WXIA/WATL in Atlanta](#) reported that large crowds appeared along the Chattahoochee River, ignoring social distancing requirements; the park and local communities are working on a solution to the problem. The [Rumsen-Fair Haven Patch](#) says that there were no issues with beach crowding or overcapacity at Sandy Hook in Gateway over the weekend. An article in [The](#)

[Guardian](#) reports on the huge number of visitors arriving in Yellowstone over the holiday weekend, noting that neither visitors were disregarding social distancing and that masks were not generally seen.

- *Second Lady Visits Smokies* – On May 19th, Second Lady Karen Pence and Deputy Secretary of Interior Katharine MacGregor visited the park to talk about the many mental health benefits the outdoors offers and shared more on the park’s progress on the second phase of restoring access to the public, [reports the White House](#). “The COVID-19 pandemic has created an urgent need for us to pay closer attention to our mental health and emotional well-being,” said Pence. “Our amazing national parks offer many mental health benefits and more than ever before, we must ensure that we are taking care of ourselves and each other.”

For information on the status of other parks in the system, go to the Service’s [“Active Alerts In Parks” webpage](#) and use the search engine to find information on a particular site.

Note

A number of incident reports are pending. Will get to them next week.

National Fire Situation

**National Interagency Fire Center
Fire Activity Remains Minimal Nationwide**

NIFC remains at PL 1. Only two large fires are reported nationwide.

Only one IMT – Houseman’s NIMO team – remains committed. The team has been assigned to COVID-19 support at Forest Service headquarters in Washington D.C.

Resource Commitment Trend

Category	May 5	May 12	May 26
Area Command Teams	0	0	0
NIMO Teams	1	1	1
Type 1 Teams	0	0	0
Type 2 Teams	0	1	0
Crews	0	6	9
Engines	30	134	55
Helicopters	1	18	5
Total FF/Overhead	107	876	403

Fires/Acreage

Category	2010-2019 Ave	2020 Total	Difference
United States: YTD Fires	21,451	17,183	- 4,268
United States: YTD Acres	1,069,974	365,412	- 704,562

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

May 11 – The Senate agreed to [S. Res. 569](#), expressing the sense of the Senate that, during Public Service Recognition Week, public servants should be commended for their dedication and continued service to the United States.

May 12 – The Committee on the Judiciary held a hearing to examine liability during the COVID-19 pandemic, after receiving testimony from public witnesses. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

May 12 – The Senate agreed to [S. Res. 574](#), designating the week of April 18, 2020, through April 26, 2020, as “National Park Week”.

May 12 – The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation held a hearing to examine the state of broadband amid the COVID-19 pandemic, after receiving testimony from public witnesses. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

House Actions

May 14 – The Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health held a hearing entitled “Protecting Scientific Integrity in the COVID-19 Response”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

May 15 – The House agreed to [H. Res. 965](#), authorizing remote voting by proxy in the House of Representatives and providing for official remote committee proceedings during a public health emergency due to a novel coronavirus, by a vote of 217 yeas to 189 nays.

May 15 – The House passed [H.R. 6800](#), making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2020, by a yeas-and-nays vote of 208 yeas to 199 nays. Among other provisions, the bill includes the following:

- Division G, Title III – requires Federal employees to telework through December 31, 2020, as long as they are eligible to telework under federal law.
- Division Q, Title II – establishes a schedule of pay differentials for federal employees dealing with the public during the pandemic, up to certain pay levels.

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.

- *Acadia NP* – The park is poised “any day now” to take over the vacant Bass Harbor Head Light Station, setting the stage for a new era for the iconic lighthouse, one of the most popular attractions within the park’s boundaries. Ahead of becoming the new owner, Acadia is weighing recommendations in a new study of Bass Harbor Head Light by the National Park Service’s Historic Preservation Training Center. The “Bass Harbor Head Light Station Historic Structure Report,” produced with funds donated by the Friends of Acadia, is aimed at guiding future

rehabilitation and repair work at the 2.75-acre complex including the original 1858 lighthouse with its cylindrical brick tower, the 1858 keeper's dwelling, and the 1905 wood-frame garage. The Coast Guard currently owns the iconic lighthouse and other structures and has been planning to transfer it to Acadia since 2017. The article provides details on the lighthouse's history and on the planned transfer. Source: Dolores Kong and Dan Ring, [Bangor Daily News](#).

- *Gettysburg NMP* – DOI has awarded a \$573,000 Battlefield Land Acquisition Grant to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission to acquire two tracts for the park. The East Cemetery Hill Tract consists of .7 acres along Baltimore Pike and is contiguous with land previously preserved through American Battlefield Protection Program funding. American Battlefield Trust plans to restore the property to its 1863 appearance to enhance the public's understanding of the military actions that occurred there. The land will be protected in perpetuity with a conservation easement held by the Land Conservancy of Adams County. The 47 acre Vermont Tract in the south part of the park abuts the Gettysburg National Military Park on two sides and its acquisition will prevent development that might obscure views of Big Round Top. Source: [Gettysburg Connection](#).
- *Valley Forge NHP* – The park is the recipient of EPA's award for national federal facility excellence in site reuse. The award recognizes innovative thinking and cooperation among federal agencies, states, tribes, local partners and developers that has led to noteworthy restoration and reuse of federal facility sites. The Valley Forge Asbestos Release Site is a 112-acre area located in the center of the park. The area was contaminated by activities of an asbestos insulation manufacturing plant that formerly operated on the property. In 2017, the National Park Service completed a long-term remedial cleanup action to excavate contaminated soil and sediment so the site could be re-opened. Now, the park is back in business conserving and interpreting the land associated with the 1777-78 winter encampment of Gen. George Washington and the Continental Army. Source: [Environmental Protection Agency](#).

NPS Projects

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

- ***Grand Teton NP*** – The concessions contract between the park and Grand Teton Lodge Company will expire on December 31, 2021. The NPS is considering what visitor services to require or authorize in the next concessions contract, which has an anticipated effective date of January 1, 2022. An EA is being prepared that will examine potential new construction and facility improvements that may be included in the prospectus. Improvements would include constructing additional concession employee housing, installing fire protection enhancements, improving accessibility improvements, adding amenities at campgrounds, reconfiguring food and beverage services, and relocating a concessioner-operated warehouse. [You can comment on the project through June 22nd](#).
- ***Hawaii Volcanoes NP*** – The park will be undertaking a project to repair and/or replace critical park infrastructure and U.S. Geological Survey-operated facilities damaged during the 2018 eruption and summit collapse of Kilauea volcano. The project will include plans for visitor service and administrative sites and addresses potential future use of the Uēkahuna Bluff area. [Comments may be made until June 15th](#).
- *Lake Roosevelt NRA* – The park is in the process of evaluating potential management strategies for improving visitor experience at nine priority sites – Evans, Marcus Island, Kettle Falls, Keller Ferry, Spring Canyon, Porcupine Bay, Gifford, Hunters and Fort Spokane. [Comments are being taken on the plan through May 30th](#).
- ***Mesa Verde NP*** – The park is seeking public comment on an environmental assessment to evaluate the impacts of improving the existing Mesa Top Loop Roads and the intersection at the entrance of Mesa Verde National Park. [The comment period is open until June 19th](#).

Briefly Noted

Other matters of interest pertaining to the parks and their people.

- *Newest Edition Of GWS Magazine Now Out* – The newest edition of [Parks Stewardship Forum](#), an “interdisciplinary journal of place-based conservation” published by the George Wright Society and UCal/Berkeley, is now out. The theme of this edition is “America’s Largest Classroom: Expanding the Role of Education in Our Parks.” The opening page of [this edition](#) includes a detailed listing of all the articles within. Source: Dave Harmon, George Wright Society.
- *New Book On 1980 Bear Attack in Smokies* – Former Great Smoky Mountains ranger Jerry Grubb has just published a book that retells the incidents of a May 2000 bear attack that cost Glenda Ann Bradley her life. [Bear Attack in the Smokies, Memoirs of a National Park Ranger](#) includes information corroborated by other rangers who were involved as well as Grubb’s own experiences, memories, and analysis of the events and incidents as they happened. “The book has been 20 years in the making,” Grubb said. “I’ve never considered writing a book. I finally sat down and wrote it. There was a lot of misleading information, and untrue information. And I have written a book to clarify. I was the ranger on scene who shot and killed the two bears who attacked Glenda Ann Bradley.” Source: Ken Ingram, [WATE](#).

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.

- *Good (and Bad) News On Carbon Emissions* – On May 19th, the journal *Nature Climate Change* carried [a study on global carbon dioxide emissions](#) that revealed they’ve dropped an amazing 17% since this time last year – due, of course, to business and travel shutdowns stemming from the global pandemic. It’s a worldwide drop that scientists say could be the largest in recorded history. At the height of coronavirus confinements in early April, daily carbon dioxide emissions around the world decreased by roughly 18.7 million tons compared to average daily emissions last year, falling to levels that were last observed in 2006. Though significant, scientists say these declines are unlikely to have a long-term impact once countries return to normal unless governments prioritize investments and infrastructure to reduce harmful emissions. Source: Denise Chow, [NBC News](#).
- *NOAA Predicts Active Hurricane Season* – An above-normal 2020 Atlantic hurricane season is expected, according to forecasters with NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center, a division of the National Weather Service. The outlook predicts a 60% chance of an above-normal season, a 30% chance of a near-normal season and only a 10% chance of a below-normal season. The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1st through November 30th. The center is forecasting a likely range of 13 to 19 named storms (winds of 39 mph or higher), of which 6 to 10 could become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), including 3 to 6 major hurricanes (category 3, 4 or 5; with winds of 111 mph or higher). NOAA provides these ranges with a 70% confidence. An average hurricane season produces 12 named storms, of which 6 become hurricanes, including 3 major hurricanes. Source: [National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration](#).

The Coalition

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.

- *Final Rule On Alaska Hunting Regs* – CPANP has [issued a statement](#) expressing outrage at the National Park Service’s decision to announce the final rule that amends its regulations to adopt the state of Alaska’s approved hunting practices, which target predator species and include killing black bear sows with cubs at den sites; killing wolves and coyotes, including pups, during denning season; and harvesting brown bears over bait. The final rule will be published this week.
- *Reopening Of National Parks* – Phil Francis and Joan Anzelmo were guests on [a podcast from the Center for Western Priorities](#). They participated in a discussion about Interior Secretary David Bernhardt’s rush to reopen national parks despite warnings from career NPS staff about risks to employees and the public.
- *CPANP Joins Opposition To Eagle Crest Project* – The Coalition continues to oppose legislation that would benefit the [Eagle Crest project](#) by [signing on to a letter](#) about CA Assembly Bill 2255, that also addresses companion legislation (CA AB 2736) which would also enable the Eagle Crest project.
- *Great American Outdoors Act* – The Coalition [signed on to a letter](#) sent to congressional leadership in support of the Great American Outdoors Act. It was signed by over 850 national/regional/local groups.
- *EPA Clean Air Guidance* – The Coalition joined its partners in [a letter to EPA](#) expressing concern about the new guidance EPA sent to states in August entitled “Guidance on Regional Haze State Implementation Plans for the Second Implementation Period.” In the letter, we urge the EPA to rescind or modify the guidance so that it comports with the Clean Air Act and the Regional Haze Rule and aids states in making progress towards achieving the national goal of natural visibility conditions at all Class I areas.
- *Overdue Confirmation Of NPS Director* – The Coalition [commented on a recent lawsuit claiming that David Vela and William Perry Pendley have been kept in their positions unconstitutionally](#) and that Interior Secretary Bernhardt also broke federal law by using Vela and Pendley, deputy directors, to work as agency heads. Phil Francis said, "being confirmed by the Senate adds a level of security that allows for more decision making at the director level where it properly belongs. A confirmed director can think more long-term to help establish a way forward for the agency and clarify for the agency as a whole what the priorities are."
- *Advocacy Toolkit* – The Coalition has developed [an advocacy toolkit](#) focused on the subject of park reopenings during the pandemic. It summarizes our position on when national parks should safely reopen and urges members to reach out to their Congressional representatives or share some of our guidance on their social media. This has been shared with media, partners, and Congressional staff,
- *Two Op-Eds On Oil And Gas Leasing* – Coalition EC member Sheridan Steele penned [an op-ed](#) for *The Colorado Sun*, calling on the Interior Department to pause oil and gas lease sales during the pandemic. Coalition members Rick Smith and Cherry Payne submitted [a joint op-ed](#) to the *Carlsbad Current-Argus*, just in time for the 90th birthday of Carlsbad Caverns National Park. In it, they urge DOI to postpone upcoming oil and gas lease sales on the doorstep of the park, especially during the pandemic.
- *Op-Ed On Premature Reopening Of Grand Canyon* – Coalition member and former Grand Canyon Superintendent Rob Arnberger’s has [an op-ed](#) in the *Arizona Republic* conveying our messaging that it is too soon to open national parks, including Grand Canyon.

Source: Emily Thompson, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator.

Park People

NPS Alumni

Passing Of Darryll Ray Johnson

Darryll Ray Johnson, 77, longtime member of the NPS CPSU at the University of Washington, passed away on April 8th.

Johnson started as a graduate assistant working at UW's College of Forest Resources. Recruited to work for the National Park Service CPSU, headquartered at UW, he led studies in Alaska, Washington, Oregon and California. His career with NPS spanned 30 years, and was highlighted by many publications, honors and awards.

A private family memorial service will be held at a future date.

A memorial fund has been established in his name at the UW School of Environmental and Forest Sciences Fund. You can donate by phone at 1-877-UW-GIFTS (1-877-894-4387). Or by mail: University of Washington, 4333 Brooklyn Ave. NE, Box 359505, Seattle, WA 98195-9505. Checks should be made payable to the University of Washington and reference that this is a memorial gift in tribute to Darryll Johnson (FOREDI).

Source: [Seattle Times](#).

National Park Service

Recent NPS Management Changes

Here's a listing of recent personnel changes in the NPS. Click on the links following the brief summaries for additional details:

- *South Atlantic–Gulf Region* – Stan Austin has been selected as the new regional director of the South Atlantic–Gulf Region. He will return to the Atlanta-based operation in late June after having served two years as regional director of the NPS Lower Colorado Basin, Columbia-Pacific Northwest, California-Great Basin and Pacific Islands region. Austin will oversee 73 parks in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Source: [National Park Service](#).
- *Kenai Fjords NP* – Eric Veach, the park's current superintendent, left the NPS on May 26th to take a position as the new supervisor of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in Southwest Washington. Veach began his federal career as a fish biologist in the Payette National Forest in Idaho following several seasonal positions working for Forest Service and the Nez Perce Tribe. For the past 20 years he's worked for the National Park Service in Alaska in a variety of positions. Source: [The Daily News](#).
- *Devils Postpile NM* – Deanna Dulen, who has been the park's superintendent for the last two decades, will be retiring at the end of the month. Dulen started her career in 1979 as a seasonal firefighter with the Olympic National Forest, then went on to positions as a park ranger at Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Death Valley and Denali. Kevin Killian, currently the chief ranger at Yosemite, will be serving as the interim site manager of Devil's Postpile. Source: [Sierra News](#).
- *Tule Springs Fossil Beds NM* – Derek Carter has been selected to serve as the superintendent of Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument, located near Boulder City, Nevada. He will assume his new position on June 7th. He is currently the chief of administration for Lassen Volcanic. Source: [Cumberland Times-News](#).

- *Assateague Island NS* - Hugh Hawthorne will be the new superintendent of Assateague Island, effective next month. Hawthorne previously served as superintendent at Gila Cliff Dwellings and William Howard Taft. Source: [Shore Daily News](#).

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.

- *Denali NP* – Three Washington state mountaineers were found dead on the West Buttress route on Mt. McKinley on the morning of Friday, May 26th. The three men were ascending the West Buttress from a camp at 11,000 feet when the snow bridge they were on collapsed into a crevasse. Although they fell only five to ten feet, blocks of snow and ice fell on top of them. The bodies have been recovered and flown off the mountain. In a separate incident, two climbers were treated for serious frostbite to their hands at the ranger camp at 14,200 feet. Both elected to descend the mountain with other climbers. A third person was treated for a heart problem made more serious by altitude and evacuated by helicopter to Talkeetna. Weather on the mountain was generally bad all last week. Up to eight feet of snow fell at the base camp at Kahiltina Glacier, and winds blew at speeds over 60 mph. There were over 400 climbers on the mountain during the week. Submitted by Public Affairs Officer John Quinley.
- *Mammoth Cave NP* – A series of severe thunderstorms which passed through Kentucky on May 18th forced the closure of several areas due to high water and knocked out power to the park for most of the day. Lightning also struck the generator at the park's sewage lift station and put it out of commission. The lack of power and extreme infiltration from rain (a total of three inches fell during the day) led to effluent overflow, so a tanker truck was utilized to transfer sewage to gravity lines downstream of the lift station. The problem was resolved when power came back on. Samples were taken of the overflowing effluent and from a nearby stream to compare to background water chemistry associated with the storm. The sewer plant operator estimated that the total flow for the 24-hour period exceeded 330,000 gallons and consisted primarily of storm water. Completion of the rehab of the park's sewer system and connection to a local system in the near future should alleviate long-standing problems with sewage disposal in the park. Work has also begun on burial of power lines in the park, which should minimize power outages. The heavy rainfall also led to the cresting of the Green River at a level almost 40 feet above normal and the closure of both park ferries, two campgrounds and a motor nature trail. All were to be reopened as soon as the river receded. Submitted by Acting Chief Ranger Henry Holman.
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* – On May 17th, a motel owner who cut down 22 trees (seven of them over 22 inches in diameter) and constructed a road across park property was tried in magistrate's court and found guilty. He was ordered to pay \$2,500 for each violation and \$67,538 for resource damage, investigation, and restoration costs. The park's landscape architect testified to the value of the trees, using a formula derived from the International Society of Arboriculturists' Guide to Plant Appraisal. Factors considered in the case included the age of the trees, the park's recorded history of protecting the trees, and the trees' role as a visual screen. Submitted by Chief Ranger's Office.

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- Production: Steve Pittleman
- Regular Correspondents: Don Hellmann, Dennis Burnett, Rick Smith, Emily Thompson, and Duncan Morrow
- Issue Contributors: Mike Panz, Bob Martin, Cathy Halainen, Dick Martin, Elizabeth Oster

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.

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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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