



## The Coalition Weekly Report Wednesday, January 15, 2020

Volume 4

Number 2

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### Incidents

#### **Kings Canyon NP Concession Building At Grant Grove Village Burns**

A blaze last Friday morning left a commercial building at Grant Grove Village unusable.

The building, used by the park's concessioner, Delaware North Companies, was found fully engulfed in flames by fire crews. The structure contained kitchen, laundry and restroom facilities for their staff. The blaze was confined to half the building due to its design, which included a separating fire wall.

The cause of the fire is under investigation.

The park service was assisted by two units from Hume Lake Fire and Rescue and crews from Tulare County Fire Department.

Source: Paul Schlesinger, [KSEE/KGPE News](#).

#### **Everglades NP Alligator Bites Teenager**

On Friday, January 10th, an 18-year-old visiting the park with a teacher and around 15 other members of a college class suffered two puncture wounds when she was bitten in the leg by an alligator. She was swimming in the water when the reptile bit her.

Rangers and Miami Dade Fire and Rescue personnel responded. The teenager was calm following her ordeal and reported that she wasn't experiencing much pain. First responders offered to take the girl to hospital by air ambulance, but she declined. She later made her own way to a hospital.

A park biologist said the alligator may have bitten the woman in an act of defense, according to officials. This can happen even if the alligator is provoked accidentally.

As a result of the incident, the Movie Dome area around the Pa-hay-okee Trail has been temporarily closed to allow officials to evaluate the animal and assess the situation.

"While the park is a safe place to visit," said spokesperson Allyson Gantt, "we remind visitors to stay alert and exercise caution, especially around wildlife, and do not recommend swimming in the park."

Source: Kashmiri Gander, [Newsweek](#).

## **Yosemite NP Park Staff, Visitors Struck By Stomach Illness**

At least a dozen people in Yosemite have fallen ill with gastrointestinal problems, prompting federal health officials to conduct widespread inspections of the park's food service facilities, including at the Ahwahnee Hotel.

The National Park Service and the U.S. Public Health Service confirmed last Thursday that they launched an investigation into the origin of the reported illnesses after Yosemite Valley employees and visitors came forward this month with stomach issues.

Federal officials said it was too early to identify the illness, or illnesses, or where it might have come from, but are working with the operator of Yosemite's many restaurants, snack shops and hotels, Philadelphia-based Aramark, to carry out an "extensive clean-up and disinfection" of food service areas in the valley. No dining facilities have been closed.

Source: Kurtis Alexander, [San Francisco Chronicle](#).

## **Cape Hatteras NS Surfer Bitten By Shark**

A surfer suffered an apparent shark bite off Rodanthe on the afternoon of Monday, January 13th.

The 26-year-old Manteo man was bitten on the foot while surfing in the Atlantic Ocean. Dare County Emergency Medical Services transported him to the Outer Banks Hospital for further treatment.

Buxton-native and pro surfer Brett Barley reported that there had been major shark activity in the surf off Hatteras Island during the 48 hours up to and after the incident.

Last year, three people were bitten by sharks off the North Carolina coast, all of them south of the Outer Banks. All survived, though a 17-year-old girl bitten while surfing had to have one of her legs amputated.

Source: Kari Pugh, [OBX Today](#).

## **National Park System Park Operating Status Summary**

A summary of recent openings, closures and other changes in the status of parks and their facilities,

- *Chaco Culture NHP* – Seventeen of the 49 sites at Gallo Campground have been closed indefinitely due to the danger of possible rockfalls. The park has been aware of the threat, but recently became concerned that it may have worsened. Park staff are studying the best way to deal with the situation over the long term. Source: Mike Easterling, [Farmington Daily Times](#).
- *Glacier NP* – Sperry Chalet has been reopened. On Monday, it began taking reservations for the first time since a wildfire gutted the building in 2017. The NPS spent about \$12 million rebuilding the chalet. It's open for stays from July 18th to September 13th. Source: [Flathead Beacon](#).

## **National Park System Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents**

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

- *Yellowstone NP* – On January 9th, two men were sentenced to 10 days in jail each for trespassing on the cone of Old Faithful geyser. On the morning of September 10th, employees and visitors saw the two men walking on the cone and reported it to park dispatch. A ranger

contacted and cited Eric Schefflin, 20, of Lakewood, Colorado, and Ryan Goetz, 25, of Woodstock, New York. Schefflin and Goetz appeared in court last December; both men pleaded guilty to the violation of thermal trespass. In addition to jail time, the men each owe \$540 in restitution, face five years of unsupervised probation, and are banned from the park for that time. Source: [Casper Star Tribune](#).

- *Hawaii Volcanoes NP* – Recovery from the 2018 eruption continues. Last week, the park awarded a \$3.3 million contract to a construction company to repair roads and trails that were damaged during the eruption. Among the areas slated for repair are Crater Rim Drive and Trail between Kilauea Military Camp and Kilauea Overlook; Waldron Ledge and Crater Rim Trail between Volcano House and Kilauea Iki; a five-mile section of Hilina Pali Road between Kulanaokuaiki Campground and the Hilina Pali Overlook; Chain of Craters Road; a section of pavement near the entrance station; and a road servicing the park's water-catchment system. Work is expected to begin by mid-February and will likely conclude this summer. Source: [West Hawaii Today](#).

## **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**

**December 20** – The president signed into law S. 216, to provide for equitable compensation to the Spokane Tribe of Indians of the Spokane Reservation for the use of tribal land for the production of hydropower by the Grand Coulee Dam. The dam is within Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area. (Public Law 116–100).

**December 30** – The president signed into law H.R. 150, to modernize Federal grant reporting. (Public Law 116–103).

**January 7** – The president signed into law H.R. 1424, to amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure the Secretary of Veterans Affairs permits the display of Fallen Soldier Displays in national cemeteries. (Public Law 116–106).

### **Senate Actions**

**January 6** - Senator-designate Kelly Loeffler, of Georgia, was administered the oath of office by the Vice President. Sen. Loeffler (R-GA) takes the seat vacated by former Senator Johnny Isackson (R-GA), who resigned at the end of 2019 for health reasons.

**January 6** – The nomination of Katharine MacGregor, of Pennsylvania, to be Deputy Secretary of the Interior, was submitted to the Senate.

**January 9** – The Senate passed:

- H.R. 925, to improve protections for wildlife, with amendments. The bill makes a number of amendments to existing fish and wildlife protection programs under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department of Commerce. Sec. 110 of the bill extends the authorization for the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network under the National Park Service from FY 2019 through FY 2025. The bill now returns to the House for further action.
- S. 1982, to improve efforts to combat marine debris.

**January 9** – The Senate confirmed the nomination of Paul J. Ray, of Tennessee, to be Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, by a vote of 50 yeas to 44 nays.

## **House Actions**

**January 7** - The Speaker laid before the House a communication from the Chairman of the Democratic Caucus stating that Representative Van Drew (D-NJ) has resigned as a Member of the Democratic Caucus. Rep. Van Drew had announced in December that he was switching political parties to become a Republican. Because of this action, Rep. Van Drew is automatically no longer a member of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee according to House rules.

**January 7** - A letter from Representative Hunter was read, wherein he resigned as Representative for the Fiftieth Congressional District of California, effective at close of business on January 13th. Rep. Hunter (R-CA) was convicted at the end of 2019 for using campaign funds for personal use. His sentencing is in February.

## **National Park Service**

### **National Park System**

A summary of articles pertaining to management and oversight of the NPS, to current trends and issues affecting the National Park System, or to either all or parts of the entire system.

- *'Dismantling' Of National Parks Underway* – The Guardian, an English newspaper with a worldwide audience, has posted an article on “the great dismantling of America's national parks” by brothers Jon and Destry Jarvis – Jon was the Service's 18th director, Destry has spent 47 years as an advocate for national parks working for several non-governmental organizations and in the private sector. The opening sentence sets the tone for the piece: “Under this administration, nothing is sacred as we watch the nation's crown jewels being recut for the rings of robber barons.” They list a series of anti-park actions taken by the administration, then ask rhetorically why they'd want to do that to the universally popular national parks. Their answer: “Because if you want to drill, mine and exploit the public estate for the benefit of the industry, the last thing you want is a popular and respected agency's voice raising alarms on behalf of conservation and historic preservation. Because if you want the public to ignore the science of climate change, the last thing you want are trusted park rangers speaking the truth to park visitors. Because if you want to get the federal government small enough (in the words of Grover Norquist) to ‘drown it in a bathtub’, the last thing you want is a government agency with high popular appeal that needs to grow rather than shrink.” The article closes with this proposal: “When this nightmare ends, and we begin to rebuild, we suggest it is time for Congress to consider making the National Park Service an independent institution, more akin to the Smithsonian, and no longer subject to the vicissitudes of a hostile political agenda in a Department of the Interior dominated by extractive industries and anti-public land crusaders.” Source: Jonathan and Destry Jarvis, [The Guardian](#).
- *Aging Roads Pose Growing Challenge For NPS Managers* – In its newest study, the Pew Charitable Trusts looks at one aspect of the Service's maintenance backlog – the decline of the more than 5,000 miles of paved roads within the parks. Many of these roads, says the report, “are showing their age.” The causes go beyond age, though: “[Many] park roads were constructed decades ago when cars were smaller; as a result, routes often are narrow and lack shoulders—an issue for today's larger cars and recreational vehicles. Also, increased visits at many park sites lead to overflowing parking lots, forcing visitors to park on roadsides, which in turn damages natural resources and can be a safety hazard.” They propose a funding increase for NPS roads in the upcoming reauthorization of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, which will expire in September. The five-year spending bill authorized \$305 billion for federal highway programs from 2016 to 2020, with NPS programs receiving about \$1.4 billion for construction and repairs. Pew recommends that this amount be increased substantially. Source: Marcia Argust, [Pew Charitable Trusts](#).

## **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.

- *Blue Ridge Parkway* – A land parcel near Pinnacle Ridge was recently donated to the park by a nonprofit North Carolina land conservancy. Conservation Trust for North Carolina donated 53 acres of forested, scenic land to the National Park Service, further protecting water quality in the headwaters of Richland Creek, which is part of the Waynesville Watershed. The Pinnacle Ridge property is on the boundary of several natural heritage and other important wildlife habitats, but has yet to be inventoried because it was privately owned prior to its purchase by CTNC in 2013. Source: Luke Weir, [Mountaineer](#).
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* – The above wasn't the only Christmas gift to the park. Thunder Hill Overlook, a 229-acre tract of land on the outskirts of Blowing Rock, will be permanently free from subdivision, development and logging after being acquired by the Conservation Trust for North Carolina. CTNC plans to donate the Watauga County property to the Service for incorporation in the Blue Ridge Parkway park boundary. The Thunder Hill Overlook property is highly visible from the Blue Ridge Parkway between mileposts 290 and 291, and it can be viewed from both the Thunder Hill and Yadkin Valley overlooks. The land includes numerous unnamed streams and Martin Branch, one of the primary streams forming the headwaters of the Yadkin River. Source: [Watauga Democrat](#).
- *Cape Lookout NS* – North Core Banks — popularly known as Portsmouth Island — was violently cut apart by Hurricane Dorian the first week of September, reducing it to a series of tough-to-navigate mini islands. On December 20th, the park announced enough of those pieces have merged to create a 13-mile island. That's 9 miles shy of the original size, but National Park Service officials are expressing optimism North Core may again be 22 contiguous miles. Source: Mark Price, [News Observer](#).
- *Mesa Verde NP* – The National Park Service, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration, is considering a project which would rehabilitate Mesa Top Loop, Cliff Palace Loop and Sun Temple Loop roads, improve accessibility at adjacent overlooks, improve sidewalks and parking areas, replace the current visitor and research center intersection, and possibly widen the two-way sections of Mesa Top Loop and Sun Temple Loop roads to accommodate a bike lane. The project is open to public comment until January 30th at [the park's PEPC webpage](#). Source: [The Journal](#).
- *Yosemite NP* – On January 7th, the Ahwahnee Hotel retired the prestigious four-diamond award that hung in its lobby and marked the property's nearly three-decade run as a top-tier hotel. Inspectors with AAA, which rates hotels, visited the Ahwahnee in 2018 and determined that the property no longer met the group's four-diamond standards, awarding it to three diamonds in last year's review. The issues started after Aramark took over operation of Yosemite's concessions four years ago. Aramark initially invested heavily in many of the properties but has more recently been dogged by visitor criticism and poor performance marks from the park. Source: Kurtis Alexander, [San Francisco Chronicle](#).
- *Yosemite NP* – In mid-December, the House of Representatives torpedoed a proposal to allow limited boating on Hetch Hetchy Reservoir. Critics feared the plan could introduce contaminants to the reservoir that supplies famously pure drinking water for 2.7 million people in the Bay Area. Boating on its waters has been banned for nearly a century. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi claimed the decision as a victory for her city, which runs the Hetch Hetchy water and power system. The prohibition was included in a \$1.37 trillion spending plan the House approved to keep the federal government funded through September. Source: Dustin Gardiner, [San Francisco Chronicle](#).
- *Zion NP* – An agreement has been reached with a family that owns a section of land along a popular park trail, ensuring that the trail will remain open permanently and the land won't be

developed. The agreement was reached between The Trust For Public Land and the Bulloch Family, which owns an 880-acre property known as Simon Gulch. The property borders the eastern section of the park, including a one-mile stretch of the 16-mile Zion Narrows Trail. TPL acquired the development rights to the tract for \$1.5 million; funding came from the State of Utah, Washington County, the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Foundation, the George S. and Dolores Dore Eccles Foundation and other groups. Source: Carter Williams, [KSL News](#).

## **Briefly Noted**

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

- *New GWS Publication* – The University of California Berkeley’s Institute for Parks, People, and Biodiversity and the George Wright Society have just published the inaugural edition of *Parks Stewardship Forum, The Interdisciplinary Journal of Place-Based Conservation*. This new open-access journal will “serve the global stewards of parks, protected areas, cultural sites, and other forms of place-based conservation.” The inaugural issue, “Climate Change and Protected Places: Adapting to New Realities,” looks at how protected places are adapting and building resilience to the impacts of climate change. This is a special double issue, with over 25 essays, case studies, and a concluding photographic essay. You can find *Parks Stewardship Forum* on two websites, each with a distinct purpose – the [University of California’s eScholarship platform](#), a site designed for scholarly reference and use, with articles readable and downloadable in PDF format, or on [IPPB’s website](#), which has been designed with online browsing and reading in mind. The content of the journal is identical on both sites; only the web interface is different. For a free subscription, or for more information on how to propose a paper or photoessay, please visit <https://www.georgewrightociety.org/psf>. Comments on the publication may be sent to [psf@georgewright.org](mailto:psf@georgewright.org). Source: David Harmon, Executive Director, George Wright Society.

## **The Federal Government**

News from around the federal government – including DOI, kindred agencies and the courts – of consequence to the NPS.

- *Administration Moves Against NEPA* – “President Trump on Thursday capped a three-year drive to roll back clean air and water protections by proposing stark changes to the nation’s oldest and most established environmental law that could exempt major infrastructure projects from environmental review,” reports the *New York Times*. The proposed changes will narrow the range of projects requiring environmental assessments, impose strict new deadlines on completing assessments, eliminate the need for agencies to consider the “cumulative impacts” of projects – particularly in regard to climate change. “Since taking office Mr. Trump has proposed nearly 100 environmental rollbacks, including weakening protections for endangered species, relaxing rules that limit emissions from coal plants and blocking the phase out of older incandescent light bulbs. Hundreds of thousands of public comments against the president’s moves have flowed in. Scientists have spoken out in opposition. Democrats have vowed to stop him, all with little effect.” Nonetheless, there are serious legal impediments to the proposed changes, as noted in the following quote from a professor of environmental law: “A regulation can’t change the requirements of a statute as interpreted by the courts...” Source: Lisa Friedman, [New York Times](#).

## **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.

- *US Responds To Australian Requests For Firefighters* – National Park Service firefighters have joined those from other U.S. federal and state agencies in assisting Australia with its current fire epidemic. As of January 7th, there were 159 U.S. firefighters in Australia and NIFC is planning to send another 100 this week – the largest-ever deployment of U.S. firefighters abroad. The Australian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council requested the firefighters as part of a reciprocal deal that sent 138 Australians to fight U.S. wildfires in 2018. The U.S. has similar agreements with Canada, Mexico and New Zealand. Source: [KIRO News](#).
- *Climate Change In The 2020s: Action ‘Beyond Urgent’ Will Be Needed* – Elizabeth Kolbert, author of *The Sixth Extinction*, frequent *New Yorker* contributor, and one of the savviest observers and commentators on the climate change crisis writing today, has an article in this edition entitled “What Will Another Decade of Climate Crisis Bring?” Excerpts follow: “In a Dantean sort of way, Australia’s holiday-season infernos provided a fitting close to 2019, which has been called ‘the year the world woke up to the climate crisis.’” What, then, will the 2020s bring? “In geophysical terms, this question is almost too easy to answer. Temperatures will continue to rise...And with still higher temperatures will come still greater damage...Which brings us to the question of what it means to ‘wake up.’ If in the past year (or the past decade) the world began to understand how dangerous climate change is, it certainly didn’t act like it. In the past ten years, more CO2 was emitted than in all of human history up to the election of J.F.K.... Really waking up, and not just dreaming to ourselves that things will be O.K., has become urgent—beyond urgent, in fact. To paraphrase Victoria’s fire authority: The world is in danger, and we need to act immediately to survive.” You can read the full piece at the following link. Source: Elizabeth Kolbert, [The New Yorker](#).
- *Global Warming ‘Tipping Point’ Passed* – “As extreme wildfires burn across large swaths of Australia, scientists say we’re witnessing how global warming can push forest ecosystems past a point of no return,” reports *Inside Climate News*. “Some of those forests won’t recover in today’s warmer climate, scientists say. They expect the same in other regions scarred by flames in recent years; in semi-arid areas like parts of the American West, the Mediterranean Basin and Australia, some post-fire forest landscapes will shift to brush or grassland...The surge of large, destructive forest fires from the Arctic to the tropics just in the last few years has shocked even researchers who focus on forests and fires and who have warned of such tipping points for years. The projections were seen as remote, ‘something that would happen much farther in the future,’ said University of Arizona climate scientist David Breashers. ‘But it’s happening now. Nobody saw it coming this soon, even though it was like a freight train. It’s likely the forests won’t be coming back as we know them.’” The article does on to explain the myriad impacts that climate change is having on forests and concludes with this summation by a British scientist: “The changing climate is massively exacerbating the risk of catastrophic fire, and we are seeing the consequences of that globally. Even where fire isn’t taking forests out, we are seeing drought-driven mortality risk escalate. Add to that changing pest and pathogen distributions and rampant deforestation, and trees are really in trouble just at the time that we need them most. The big risk of all of this being that carbon already locked away gets released in the blink of an eye. We take forests for granted—but we can see just how fast we can change the way forests work and how seriously it can impact us in return.” Source: Bob Berwyn, [Inside Climate News](#).

## **National Park System Issues**

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

- *Mount Rainier NP* – The warming climate continues to have a dramatic impact on the park’s glaciers and ice fields. According to a park geomorphologist, Rainier lost 25 percent of all its ice between 1913 and 1994. Another 20 percent has been lost since 2003. The Muir Snowfield, gateway to the most trafficked route on Rainier, lost about a meter of ice each year between 2003 and 2009. As the climate warms, the line marking the upper limit of the summer’s

snowmelt—the firn line—is moving higher on the mountain. At present it's between 1,000 and 1,500 feet higher than it was in the early 2000s. The article goes on to discuss the impacts these changes are having on climbing the mountain. Source: Hilary Oliver, [REI Co-Op Journal](#).

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

- *Mount Rainier NP* – On January 10th, four fishers were released in the Nisqually River watershed. A partnership led by the park, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Conservation Northwest has now met its goal of releasing more than 250 fishers in the Cascade Range and on the Olympic Peninsula, completing the final phase of a reintroduction program that began in 2008. The return of fishers to the Cascade Range marks a significant turnabout after their loss from the region for some 75 years. A video of the release can be found at [this YouTube site](#). Source: [National Park Service](#).
- *Systemwide* – The monarch butterfly – one of the most readily identifiable, common and beautiful of all butterflies – has been a fixture in the parks and elsewhere for as long as anyone can remember. But they could be gone within a few decades. “One of the world's oldest, most resilient species could be decimated — and soon — by climate change,” reports the *Washington Post*. “The butterflies are among the world’s experts in climate adaptation. They spend their summers in the northern United States and Canada; they breed in the southern United States during the fall and spring; and most spend their winters...in Central Mexico, in a few giant clusters. Their life cycles are driven by a search for optimal conditions: temperatures ideally between 55 and the low 70s when they migrate, some rain during their winters and plenty of milkweed when they mate. The criteria are narrow — and dependent on relatively consistent weather patterns. That consistency no longer exists...Because over 95 percent of the population migrates en masse to a few patches of Mexican forest, each smaller than half a football field, a single storm or heat stroke could effectively kill off the population...’If you’re talking 20, 30, 40 years out, we’re not going to be talking about monarchs any more,’ said Chip Taylor, the founder of Monarch Watch and a professor at the University of Kansas.” Source: Kevin Sieff, [Washington Post](#).
- *Cape Cod NS* – The *New York Times* ran an article in December on this year’s effort to rescue cold-stunned Kemp’s ridley sea turtles from along park and cape beaches. The chilly fall ocean temperatures cause the turtles to suffer drops in body temperature, creating a hypothermia-like condition called cold-stunning. The cold water slows the animal’s heart rate, making it lethargic and incapable of swimming back to warmer waters. The phenomena has been linked to climate change – oceans are warming, so turtles are spreading north, only to be zapped by the cold when winter comes around. The article has a series of excellent photos of the entire turtle rescue and warming operation. Source: Kendra Pierre-Louis, [New York Times](#).

**Invasive and Exotic Species** – News on exotic or invasive species that have appeared or may soon appear in NPS areas and efforts to counter them:

- *Systemwide* – “More than half of America's national parks are facing a grave and immediate threat: the ongoing presence and spread of invasive animal species,” reports Phys.org. “The National Park Service has taken the first step in combatting this invasion by asking a group of experts to help chart a course that will ensure the survival of these national treasures.” The experts' findings were recently published in the journal *Biological Invasions*. Their conclusion won't surprise anyone involved in the fight against invasives. There's not only a huge current problem, but “more invaders are likely to arrive and flourish because, currently, the National Park Service has no comprehensive program to reverse or halt the trend. Coordinated action and a financial commitment by the NPS and others will be critical.” Of the 1,409 reported populations of 311 invasive animal species presently in national parks, for example, there are management plans for 23 percent and only 11 percent are being contained. The invaders include mammals, such as rats, cats, and feral pigs; aquatic species like lake trout and the quagga mussel; and reptiles, including the Burmese python. Source: [Phys.org](#).



- *Yellowstone NP* – The annual removal of nonnative lake trout from Yellowstone Lake recently concluded, with data pointing to a declining population. Yellowstone National Park and contract crews removed 282,960 fish between May and October, compared to 297,110 in 2018, and 396,950 in 2017. That’s a 29 percent decline over three years. Lake trout are being removed in an effort to preserve the native cutthroat trout population, the largest remaining concentration of inland cutthroat trout in existence. Native cutthroat trout are the park’s most ecologically important fish and the most highly regarded by visiting anglers. They’re an important food source for grizzly bears, birds of prey, and other wildlife. The cutthroat decline resulted in several of these species being displaced from Yellowstone Lake or having to use alternate food sources during certain times of the year. Source: [Powell Tribune](#).

**Park Carrying Capacity** – Management challenges pertaining to the balance between park protection and use.

- *Joshua Tree NP* – Annual attendance at Joshua Tree nearly doubled over the past five years and reached three million visitors in 2018. This has proven to be a boon for the local economy but a major headache for the park. “[The] he increase in attendance has also led to hour-long waits at the park’s west entrance and choked parking lots inside the park,” reports the *Desert Sun*. “During peak periods, Park Service staff, from the superintendent on down, along with community partners, direct traffic, waving pass-holders through the entrance gate and managing parking at popular attractions. The park’s nine campgrounds fill up quickly during the peak season and the soaring number of rock climbers scaling the park’s rock faces and boulders have left an impact on the fragile desert environment.” The article lists the changes that the park has planned to accommodate this surge in visitation, including new entrance stations, a new visitor center in Twentynine Palms, a new visitor center at the park’s south entrance, and redesign and enlargement of the Black Rock campground. See the article for details on each of these and other planned projects. Source: Rebecca Plevin, [Desert Sun](#).

## From The Archives

This section contains incidents taken from *Morning Report* issues published during the corresponding week (approximately) 25 years ago in 1994. All entries appear in the original verb tense; “submitters” are those people who originally submitted the incident report.

- *Joshua Tree NP* – Over a three-day period in early January, park investigators, with the assistance of local deputies, state highway patrol officers, and BLM rangers, served search warrants pertaining to archeological thefts and wildlife violations at locations in Yucca Valley and Johnson Valley, California. They seized two carloads of artifacts believed to have come from NPS, BLM and Forest Service lands. Included in the collection were two large, intact ollas; three baskets containing an estimated 2,000 pottery sherds; over 60 prehistoric knife blades and scrapers; two dozen manos and metates; and boxes of other artifacts. One of the suspects has admitted to taking artifacts from Channel Islands, Lake Mead and BLM and Forest Service areas. Also seized were wildlife trophies which represented violations of the Endangered Species Act and Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Many other leads were uncovered and are currently being pursued. Submitted by Criminal Investigator Todd Swain.
- *Saguaro NP* – On January 9th, Robert Olivas was sentenced to 30 months in prison for setting numerous fires in the park, on a national forest, and elsewhere in the Tucson area last spring. A park ranger spotted Olivas extinguishing a small brush fire in the Rincon Mountain District on April 13th. He was questioned and released, but information collected by the ranger was utilized by the local county sheriff’s office in building a case against him. Olivas was also ordered to pay over \$15,000 in restitution to the park to cover resource damage costs. Submitted by Chief Ranger Paula Rooney.
- *Grand Canyon NP* – Rangers responded to a report of a stabbing at the bar at Bright Angel Hotel at 1:19 a.m. on the morning of Sunday, January 15th. Two hotel kitchen workers had apparently been arguing when one of them pulled a knife and began stabbing the other. The

victim, Adam Bennett, 24, suffered multiple stab wounds to the torso and was bleeding profusely. He was stabilized and taken to Flagstaff Medical Center by an Arizona Department of Public Safety helicopter. Bennett's assailant, 41-year-old Tai Tan Cai was arrested at the scene and the case was turned over to Coconino County deputies. It appears that Cai will be charged with attempted murder. Submitted by Karyn Shinkle.

## 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, and Duncan Morrow
- Issue Contributors: Mark Forbes, Bill Walters

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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