



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

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### Incidents

#### **Mount Rainier NP**

#### **Body Of Missing Hiker Found; Search For Two Others Continues**

On Monday, rangers found the body of one of three hikers who disappeared in separate incidents over the past 10 days.

The body of Matthew Bunker, 28, of Seattle, who vanished on Friday, was found on Monday along the base of Liberty Ridge, where he had been hiking with friends. He had been skiing behind a partner at about 10,400 feet above sea level when, on their way back down, something caused Bunker to fall in steep and treacherous terrain – an area prone to rockfalls and avalanches, including one that killed six climbers in 2014.

The search for Bunker and the other hikers was hampered by inclement weather. But on Monday, clear skies allowed for another helicopter search.

The Park Service said the searches for the two other hikers — Vincent Dije, 25, who disappeared on June 19th, and Talal Sabbagh, 17, who disappeared on June 22nd — are continuing.

According to the park, missing hikers are not uncommon on Mount Rainier at this time of year because many climbers are surprised by the changing conditions as they ascend the mountain.

Dije, a student from Indonesia who is living in Seattle, and Sabbagh, who is from Seattle, were both last seen in the area of the park known as Paradise. It is on the southern part of the mountain and where most visitors go to drive up the trail.

Dije was hiking the Van Trump Trail, at least 5,000 feet above sea level, toward Mildred Point at Longmire. His car was found at the park. The park is working closely with the Indonesian Consulate in San Francisco and with Dije's relatives.

Sabbagh's car was found parked at a lot in Paradise. He hasn't been seen since June 21st.

Source: Sandra Garcia, [New York Times](#).

#### **Yellowstone NP**

#### **Woman Gored By Bison**

A 72-year-old California woman was gored multiple times by a wild bison after repeatedly approaching the animal to take its photograph.

The woman was flown to an Idaho hospital for treatment of her injuries following the June 25th incident. She was not identified and her current condition is unknown.

The woman was at her campsite at the park's Bridge Bay Campground when she approached within 10 feet of the animal several times prior to being gored.

Source: [San Francisco Chronicle](#).

### **Grand Canyon NP Hiker Dies From Suspected Heat Stroke**

Catherine Houe, 49, was hiking into the canyon to spend a night at Phantom Ranch last Wednesday afternoon when she became dizzy and disoriented, then stopped breathing.

Rangers were called to the South Kaibab Trail around 5:30 p.m. after receiving a call about a fatality.

The high temperature on Wednesday at Phantom Ranch was about 114 degrees. It's believed that her death was related to the heat.

An investigation is underway.

Source: [KNXV News](#).

### **Lassen Volcanic NP Visitor Attacked By Otter**

A visitor was attacked by an aggressive river otter while swimming in Manzanita Lake on June 25th. There's no evidence that the visitor provoked the otter.

Despite their cute appearances, otters have sharp claws and teeth and often get territorial and aggressive when protecting their young, said the park in a Facebook posting, further noting that the otter was "most likely a female protecting its young and den."

The park has asked that visitors avoid swimming or using flotation devices in the eastern part of the lake where the incident occurred. Those who come into contact with otters should move away as quickly as possible.

Source: Julia Frankel, *Sacramento Bee*.

### **Colorado NM Missing Hiker's Body Found In Rough Terrain**

A body was found last Saturday morning in rough terrain beyond the Devil's Kitchen rock formation. It's believed to be that of Jim Fuchs, 66, who has been missing since going for a hike at the location last week. A note left on Fuchs' vehicle, which was parked at the Lower Serpents Trail parking lot, indicated plans for hiking in the park on Monday.

A multi-day search and rescue operation, involving nearly 30 volunteers and a special drone equipped with thermal imaging and cameras, was conducted in the area after a close friend reported the hiker overdue.

The search was suspended after a body matching Fuchs' description was discovered beyond the Devil's Kitchen rock formation. It's been turned over to the Mesa County Coroner's office for positive identification and determination of cause of death.

Source: Breanna Sneeringer, [Out There Colorado](#)

## **National Park System Drownings Recorded Across The Country**

Summer means a spike in visitors to NPS areas with rivers and lakes or bordering oceans, which unfortunately equates to a related spike in drownings:

- *Little River Canyon NR* – An 18-year-old drowned on June 11th after going over Little River Falls. The victim was floating on the river above the falls with friends late that afternoon. His friends got off the river about 80 feet before the waterfall, but the victim got caught up in the current and was last seen going over the waterfall. He never resurfaced from the pool below. First responders arrived on scene minutes later to begin search and rescue. Divers found the body within an hour.
- *Glen Canyon NRA* – A 46-year-old man drowned on Lake Powell while boating with a group of friends. He was trying to help a friend who was struggling in the water after high winds picked up while they were swimming in Wahweap Bay. The boat that they were on drifted away from them while they struggled to swim and couldn't be restarted quickly enough due to mechanical issues. Another passenger on the boat tried to throw a flotation device to the victim, but he couldn't reach it. When the boat finally made it back to them, another passenger jumped in and saved the first swimmer by putting him in a life jacket. He then grabbed Shannon, who was now underwater. CPR was begun while they headed south to the Stateline Launch Ramp, where off-duty firefighters and rangers continued it and also employed an AED. Neither was successful.
- *Lake Mead NRA* – Late on the afternoon of June 23rd, the park received a call reporting a man seen going underwater at Boulder Beach after swimming in an inflatable raft. Bystanders had pulled the man from the water and begun CPR; rangers responded and took over, but the man did not survive. Rangers said he was not wearing a life jacket and reminded visitors to secure their inflatables during high winds, as fatalities happen every year at the park from people swimming after inflatable pool toys and rafts.
- *Lake Mead NRA* – The body of a woman who disappeared while swimming in Lake Mead last Wednesday was found in the lake on Saturday morning. Six people on an oversized flamingo float were blown into the lake; the woman jumped off the float into the water to help another swimmer, but failed to make it back to shore. Winds were gusting to nearly 30 mph at the time of the incident. The search included rangers and officers from the Boulder City Police Department and Metropolitan Police Department, along with “numerous friends and family.” Searchers used boats, underwater cameras, divers, helicopter and people walking the shoreline while looking for her.
- *Delaware Water Gap NRA* – A 20-year-old New York man drowned in the Delaware River off Milford Beach on June 21st. First responders were notified late that afternoon; local fire departments with boats, including Dingmans, Westfall, and Matamoras, were called to the scene and recovered the body. The beach normally has lifeguards, but has none this summer. “Due to hiring delays caused by COVID-19 and to concerns for the safety of lifeguards this year, the park made the choice not to hire lifeguards for the 2020 summer season,” said the acting deputy superintendent. “Lifeguards would experience a high risk of exposure to those employees during a water rescue. One event that helped the park change its mind about having lifeguards this summer is that some lifeguards withdrew their names from consideration due to the risk of exposure.”
- *Great Smoky Mountains NP* – A visitor drowned while trying to rescue a child from the Oconaluftee River last Saturday. The man, 32-year-old Bulmaro Morales, jumped into the river to save a family member who was struggling in the water. Responding rangers found the child safe on shore, but there was no sign of Morales. He was later found unresponsive, about 10-foot underwater. Cherokee EMS and fire rescue also responded; life saving efforts were attempted but were unsuccessful.

Sources: Anna Beahm, [Huntsville Times](#); Mack Jones, [Deseret News](#); Jordan Gartner, [KTNV News](#); Frances Ruth Harris, [Pike County Courier](#); Katelyn Newberg, [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#); Bailey Aldridge, [News & Observer](#).

## **National Fire Situation**

### **National Interagency Fire Center Fire Activity Picks Up In Nevada And Utah**

The national preparedness level remains at PL 3.

Nationally, 43 large fires have burned 679,347 acres in eight states. Fire activity picked up in Nevada and Utah over last weekend. Strong winds in Utah caused active fire behavior; evacuation orders are in effect for several communities near these fires.

### **Park And Park-Related Fires**

- *Grand Canyon NP* – The Mangum Fire, which is just outside the park on the Kaibab National Forest, has caused the closure of the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. It has now burned 71,450 acres and is 63% contained; nearly 500 firefighters and overhead personnel are assigned. The park yesterday announced on Monday that the entrance gate to the North Rim would open on Tuesday following the reopening of Highway 89A and State Route 67. The North Rim will be open for day use only, however, and visitors are encouraged to be self-sufficient as services may be limited on the Kaibab Plateau following the Mangum Fire. The North Rim Visitor Center and campground will remain closed until further notice. The Grand Canyon Lodge, food and beverage services, general store, trail rides, gift shop, and the Grand Canyon Conservancy Bookstore will remain closed, with opening dates yet to be determined. The North Rim Backcountry Information Center is open, but no new backcountry permits are being issued. Sources: [InciWeb](#); [Grand Canyon NP](#).
- *Tonto NM* – The park was closed on June 19th due to the proximity of the massive Bush Fire, but reopened on June 24th. Source: [Tonto NM](#).

### **NPS Fire News**

- *California Parks* – The National Park Service has issued permits to Pacific Gas and Electric Company and Southern California Edison to perform wildfire prevention activities in 12 California national park units through a new public-private partnership that focuses on protecting park resources and streamlining communication between the NPS and utilities. As part of these new wildfire prevention efforts, which have been approved by the California Public Utilities Commission, the utilities are performing additional inspections of their power lines, vegetation management around equipment, maintenance, and repair and replacement of facilities within national park units. Under the new streamlined process, utilities will no longer need to submit separate permit applications to individual park units, nor face the prospect of working under different permit conditions for the same work performed at different parks. The permits will now use pre-negotiated standard terms and conditions, including resource protection measures jointly developed by NPS and the utilities. Source: [Sierra Sun Times](#).
- *Santa Monica Mountains NRA* – Debris cleanup got underway on Monday in several parts of the Santa Monica Mountains which were scorched in 2018's devastating Woolsey Fire, which burned 88% of the park. Cleanup efforts are taking place at several locations, including Paramount Ranch's Western Town and Cheeseboro and Palo Comado Canyon's Morrison Ranch area. The areas will be closed during the cleanup. Source: [KCAL 9](#).

### **Resource Commitment Trend**

Category	June 16	June 23	June 30
Area Command Teams	0	0	0
NIMO Teams	1	1	1
Type 1 Teams	1	3	1
Type 2 Teams	5	5	4
Crews	87	97	82
Engines	275	277	267
Helicopters	30	40	49
Total FF/Overhead	3,675	4,530	4,198

### **Fires/Acreage**

Category	2010-2019 Ave	2020 Total	Difference
United States: YTD Fires	26,920	23,806	- 3,114
United States: YTD Acres	1,995,799	1,208,488	- 787,311

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**

**June 22** – The Senate passed [S. 327](#), to amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to provide for a lifetime national recreational pass, without charge, for any veteran with a service-connected disability.

**June 23** – The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management held a hearing to examine improving public service, focusing on a review of recommendations made by the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service, after receiving testimony from former Representative Joseph J. Heck, Chairman, and Shawn Skelly, Commissioner, both of the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service.

**June 23** – The Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: Committee held a hearing to examine COVID-19, focusing on lessons learned to prepare for the next pandemic, after receiving testimony from former Senator Bill Frist; former Utah Governor Michael O. Leavitt, Salt Lake City; and public witnesses. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

**June 24** – The Committee on the Budget held a hearing to examine the nomination of Derek Kan, of California, to be Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget, after the nominee testified and answered questions in his own behalf.

**June 24** – The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs held a hearing to examine the role of the Strategic National Stockpile in pandemic response, after receiving testimony from public witnesses. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

**June 24** – The Committee on Indian Affairs held a hearing on several bills, including [S. 2165](#), to enhance protections of Native American tangible cultural heritage. Darryl LaCounte, Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs, testified on behalf of the Department of the Interior on this bill.

**June 25** – The Senate passed the following:

- [S. 2163](#), to establish the Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys, and to study and make recommendations to address social problems affecting Black men and boys.
- [S. Res. 579](#), encouraging the international community to remain committed to collaboration and coordination to mitigate and prevent the further spread of COVID-19 and urging renewed United States leadership and participation in global efforts on therapeutics and vaccine development and delivery to address COVID-19 and prevent further deaths.

## **House Actions**

**June 23** – The Committee on Appropriations held a hearing entitled “Member Day Testimony for FY21 Appropriations”. Testimony was heard from Representatives Balderson, Barragán, Casten of Illinois, Finkenauer, González-Colón of Puerto Rico, Griffith, Kevin Hern of Oklahoma, Keller, Sherman, Titus, Wilson of South Carolina, and Yoho.

**June 23** – The Committee on the Budget held a hearing entitled “Health and Wealth Inequality in America: How COVID-19 Makes Clear the Need for Change”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

**June 23** – The Committee on Energy and Commerce held a hearing entitled “Oversight of the Trump Administration's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic”. Testimony was heard from the following Department of Health and Human Services officials: Anthony S. Fauci, M.D., Director, National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes of Health; Admiral Brett P. Giroir, M.D., Assistant Secretary for Health; Stephen M. Hahn, M.D., Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration; and Robert R. Redfield, M.D., Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**June 23** – The Committee on Science, Space, and Technology Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics held a hearing entitled “R&D to Support Healthy Air Travel in the COVID-19 Era and Beyond”. Testimony was heard from Heather Krause, Director, Physical Infrastructure Issues, Government Accountability Office; and public witnesses.

**June 24** - The Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communications and Technology; and Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce held a joint hearing entitled “A Country in Crisis: How Disinformation Online is Dividing the Nation”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

**June 25** – The House passed [H.R. 7120](#), to hold law enforcement accountable for misconduct in court, improve transparency through data collection, and reform police training and policies, by a vote of 236 yeas to 181 nays.

**June 25** – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife held a hearing, among other bills, on the following:

- [H.R. 1776](#), to amend the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 to prohibit importation, exportation, transportation, sale, receipt, acquisition, and purchase in interstate or foreign commerce, or in a manner substantially affecting interstate or foreign commerce, of any live animal of any prohibited wildlife species.

- [H.R. 2264](#), to conserve global bear populations by prohibiting the importation, exportation, and interstate trade of bear viscera and items, products, or substances containing, or labeled or advertised as containing, bear viscera.
- [H.R. 6761](#), to require the Secretary of the Interior to establish a grant program to provide financial assistance to States in eradicating the Asian giant hornet. Testimony was heard from Chairman Grijalva, and Representatives Blumenauer, Gianforte, Fulcher, and Newhouse; and public witnesses. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

**June 25** – The Committee on Oversight and Reform Subcommittee on Government Operations held a hearing entitled “Frontline Feds: Serving the Public During a Pandemic”. Testimony was heard from J. Christopher Mihm, Managing Director for Strategic Issues, Government Accountability Office; and public witnesses.

**June 26** – The House passed [H.R. 3094](#), H.to designate the National Pulse Memorial located at 1912 South Orange Avenue, Orlando, Florida, 32806. The bill states that the memorial shall not be a unit of the national park system, nor may federal funds be used for any purpose related to the national memorial.

**June 26** – The House passed:

- [H.R. 51](#), to provide for the admission of the State of Washington, D.C. into the Union, by a vote of 232 yeas to 180 nays.
- [S. Con. Res. 38](#), to establish the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies for the inauguration of the President-elect and Vice President-elect of the United States on January 20, 2021.

**June 26** – The Committee on Oversight and Reform Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis held a hearing entitled “Accountability in Crisis: GAO's Recommendations to Improve the Federal Coronavirus Response”. Testimony was heard from Gene L. Dodaro, Comptroller General of the United States, Government Accountability Office.

## 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 newly discovered 1864 map, found by a historian in Gettysburg, pinpoints the hastily dug graves of soldiers on the battlefield in startling detail. The find lends a fresh perspective to the Union victory that gave President Abraham Lincoln the opportunity to announce he would issue his Emancipation Proclamation freeing thousands of enslaved Americans. Historians researching a different battle than Antietam happened upon the map, which was created by Simon Green Elliott, a New Hampshire resident lured west by the California gold rush. Now it is shedding new light on the places where more than 5,800 Americans were buried on the scenic Maryland battlefield, often just feet from where they fell. “This discovery reveals truths about the Battle of Antietam lost to time,” said Trust Chief Historian Garry Adelman, who leads many battlefield walks. “It’s like the Rosetta Stone: By demonstrating new ways that primary sources already at our disposal relate to each other, it has the power to confirm some of our long-held beliefs—or maybe turn some of our suppositions on their heads.” Source: Clint Schemmer, [Culpeper Star-Exponent](#).
- *Arches NP* – The *Canyon Country Zephyr* has published another in a series of park custodian Hank Schmidt’s monthly reports from the 30s and 40s. This one is for June 1941 and is the most recently published of Schmidt’s monthly reports, which go back to December, 1939 (all are available online [at this link](#)). The report and accompanying photos provide an interesting contrast with current operations at the park. One entry worth quoting, given Arches’ chronic

carrying capacity issues, has to do with visitation: “Travel to the monument more than doubled over the corresponding month in 1940. California, Colorado and Utah sent us the largest number of visitors with the balance of travel originating in 27 other states. Twenty-seven parties, with 132 people, were conducted through the Windows Section and 20 parties, with 170 people, were conducted at the Willow Springs Ranger Station or on the entrance road. Two parties with 11 people hiked into the Courthouse Towers section.” Source: [Canyon County Zephyr](#).

- *Fort Frederica NM* – St. Simons Land Trust has announced the sale of a nearly-20 acre tract of land that will expand the park’s footprint on St. Simons Island. The sale is the result of a nearly 15-year partnership between the Land Trust and the national park. In 2007, Land Trust staff approached Fort Frederica’s leadership about purchasing the parcel of land owned by the Sea Island Company on the northern boundary of the national monument. The proposal intended for the Land Trust to acquire and hold the property until legislation was passed in the U.S. Congress and signed into law by the president, allowing the National Park Service to purchase the property from the Land Trust. That legislation was part of the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, which was enacted last year. The garden plot for those living in the fort and in the colonial settlement during the 1700s was situated on the upland section of the tract and there is evidence of Native American occupation on the site as well. Source: Lauren McDonald, [Brunswick News](#).
- *Kennesaw Mountain NBP* – A Cobb County/NPS project to install emergency locator markers (ELMs) along 21 miles of park trails, mentioned previously in these pages, is now complete. The arrangement between the county and the National Park Service is one of the first of its kind in the nation and should lead to faster response times by Cobb first responders, according to a county statement. [Click on this link](#) for a YouTube video showing the system, which is described by the park’s chief ranger. Source: Carolyn Cunningham, [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#).
- *Mount Rushmore NP* – The *Sioux Falls Argus Leader* ran an article on the park with this provocative opening sentence: “Is there room for a fifth face on Mount Rushmore?” The park makes it very clear that the answer is “no”, not the least because there’s no place where the rock is sound enough to add another sculpture. And that’s not just an NPS opinion – when Gutzon Borglum, the sculptor of Mount Rushmore, died in 1941, his son Lincoln Borglum closed down the project, saying that no more carvable rock existed. Nonetheless, individuals and groups continue to propose additions. Among the most common are Susan B. Anthony, John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama. Oh, yes, there’s also the current occupant of the White House, who told current South Dakota governor Kristi Noem that it was his “dream” to have his face on the mountain. Source: Tom Lawrence, [Sioux Falls Argus Leader](#),
- *Yosemite NP* – The park is reversing course two weeks after reopening and now says it will hold off on reopening some campgrounds through July because of social distancing concerns in the midst of the coronavirus outbreak. Because of continued closures, reservations with arrival dates between now and July 31st have been canceled and refunds have been issued for these campgrounds: Bridalveil Horse Camp, Crane Flat, Hodgdon Meadow, Lower Pines, North Pines, Tuolumne Meadows, and 50% of Upper Pines. Source: [SFGate.com](#).

## **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.

- *Channel Islands NP* – The park is proposing to construct a new campground at Prisoners Harbor on Santa Cruz Island. It would include six small, rustic individual campsites with a maximum capacity of 24 overnight visitors. [The comment period closes on July 12th](#).



- **Cuyahoga Valley NP** – The park is evaluating options for restoring habitat and hydrology along the Cuyahoga River in Summit and Cuyahoga Counties. The ecology and water quality of the Cuyahoga River have improved substantially over recent decades but remain impaired. These impairments have resulted in designation of the reach of the river that runs through CVNP as an Area of Concern under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. Funding for this work will be provided through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). [Comments may be made through July 27th.](#)
- **Denali NP** – The park is considering implementing management decisions and constructing limited infrastructure to provide increased access and visitor opportunities in the park during the winter and shoulder seasons (approximately mid-September to mid-May). The webpage entry lists about a dozen proposed actions. [The comment period is open until June 30th.](#)
- **North Cascades NP** – The park is preparing to develop an environmental assessment to make modifications to the trail and camps in lower Thunder Creek in the Stephen Mather Wilderness. Flooding, erosion, and resource protection concerns have informed the proposed action. The preliminary proposal is to reroute 1,500 feet of trail and relocate a hiker and group camp in the vicinity of McAllister Camps on the Thunder Creek Trail. The park also proposes to construct a new administrative camp near Junction Camp another 3.5 miles up the same trail. A washed out bridge with very large steel stringers formerly used to access a closed camp would be removed by helicopter. The purpose of this action is to minimize the impacts of hiker and stock use along the trail, thereby preserving wilderness character of the designated Stephen Mather Wilderness. [Comments are being accepted until July 14th.](#)
- **Voyageurs NP** – The park is taking comments on a site development plan for the Kettle Falls area. The plan will consider improvements to recreational amenities, accessibility, wayfinding, and overnight visitor opportunities, and improvements to housing options for staff in the area while assuring the on-going protection of natural and cultural resources. The plan is needed to identify site improvements such as access for boats, houseboats, and seaplanes; additional concession staff housing and visitor overnight lodging; trails and other day-use amenities; or other amenities within a historic landscape. [Comments will be taken until July 10th.](#)

## **Briefly Noted**

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

- **Ten Best NPS Scenic Drives** – The magazine *Business Insider* has published yet another listing of “bests” in national parks, this one concerning “ten of the most beautiful scenic drives through national parks.” Here’s the list (you can read about why each was selected in the article itself): Tioga Road, Yosemite; Going-to-the-Sun Road, Glacier; Jenny Lake Scenic Drive, Grand Teton; Summit Road (on Cadillac Mountain), Acadia; Trail Ridge Road, Rocky Mountain; Kolob Canyons Road, Zion; Rim Drive, Crater Lake; Skyline Drive, Shenandoah; Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail, Great Smoky Mountains; and Geology Tour Road, Joshua Tree. Source: Frank Otto, [Business Insider](#).
- **Ten Great Places To See Meteor Showers** – The June 28th posting of EarthSky, a web publication that deals primarily with astronomy, contains a list of the ten best places in the U.S. to see meteor showers. Not surprisingly, six out of ten are national parks – Big Bend, Joshua Tree, Death Valley, Denali, White Sands and Canyonlands. Source: [EarthSky](#).
- **And One Bad Place To Practice Your Golf Shot** – The man in charge of concession operations for Yosemite had a short run in his new position after a video surfaced on social media of him teeing off at the edge of Ahwahnee Meadow, aiming to strike Half Dome with a golf ball. “That hit the rock,” said Michael Grisar at the end of a short video clip that’s since been removed but was captured by Yosemite employees and circulated widely on Thursday. Grisar was then vice president of operations for the park’s concessionaire, Yosemite Hospitality, a subsidiary of Aramark. Aramark corporate spokesman David Freireich said Friday morning that Grisar is no

longer employed by the company. He declined to comment further, saying it was a personnel matter. Source: Carmen George, [Fresno Bee](#).

## **The Federal Government**

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

- *Further Efforts Needed to Uphold Scientific Integrity Policy at EPA* – An [inspector general's report](#) at the Environmental Protection Agency made public in May found that almost 400 employees surveyed in 2018 believed a manager had interfered with or suppressed the release of scientific information, but they never reported the violations. A separate Union of Concerned Scientists survey in 2018 of more than 63,000 federal employees across 16 agencies identified the E.P.A. and Department of Interior as having the least trustworthy leadership in matters of scientific integrity. Source: [Environmental Protection Agency](#).
- *Executive Order Issued To Overhaul Federal Hiring Process* – On June 26th, the president signed an executive order to overhaul requirements federal agencies use when evaluating job candidates, seeking to downplay the importance of college degrees. The order requires agencies to increase the use of skill assessments and interviews with subject matter experts to determine an applicant's qualifications, rather than simply looking at educational achievements. Degree requirements will not go away entirely, and certain positions—such as those in medical, legal and certain technical fields—will still require advanced degrees. The goal of the order is to create a broader pool of potential federal employees and a more equitable hiring process. Source: Eric Katz, [Government Executive](#).

## **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.

- *Extraordinary Temperature Recorded In Arctic* – On Saturday, June 20th, the northeastern Siberian town of Verkhoyansk experienced a record-breaking temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit. If the measurement is confirmed it would be the hottest on record anywhere in the Arctic. On Sunday, the same location recorded a high temperature of 95.3 degrees (35.2 Celsius), showing the Saturday reading was not an anomaly. The average June high temperature in Verkhoyansk is just 68 degrees (20 Celsius). “The Siberian Arctic, like the Arctic as a whole, is seeing rapidly increasing temperatures as a result of human-caused global warming,” reported the *Washington Post*. “This is in part because of accelerating feedback loops between melting snow and ice and air and ground temperatures, as well as other features of the region’s climate. Large wildfires are proliferating from Siberia to Alaska and Scandinavia; permafrost is melting, which releases even more planet-warming greenhouse gases into the atmosphere; and sea ice extent and thickness are plummeting, among other changes.” Source: Andrew Freedman, [Washington Post](#).
- *U.S. Climate Disaster Tax Bills Growing* – “The coronavirus crisis has forced the federal government to step up suddenly with fiscal stimulus to sustain the U.S. economy and help avoid a global depression,” write Paul Bodnar and Tamara Grbusic in the June 23rd *New York Times*. “[But] this necessary intervention comes at a price — a spike in federal debt that will need to be repaid over the long term. The resulting pressure on the government, U.S. taxpayers and the broader economy will intersect with another major fiscal challenge, one that we have yet to reckon with: climate change. Even before the coronavirus pandemic struck, the federal government’s spending on climate-related disaster recovery was a rapidly rising fiscal threat. In

response to climate-related disasters in 2017, for example, Congress appropriated \$136 billion in additional funding for recovery — amounting to about \$1,000 for every American taxpayer.” These costs stem from, among other things, repairing damage to federal property and lands, federal insurance for property and crops, the cost of making public infrastructure resilient to climate impacts, and disaster aid. “Fourteen billion-dollar weather and climate calamities struck last year, the fifth year in a row with 10 or more. And projections don’t look good.” They provide some stunning numbers on the rising costs of disaster response, then conclude with this observation: “We have a choice between a carbon tax and a spiraling climate disaster tax. In a fast-approaching future where higher public spending and escalating debt will require higher levels of taxation, a carbon tax is a prudent choice. It can provide an important source of revenue, encourage industries to decarbonize and lower the danger of further credit rating downgrades — all while decreasing future disaster risk by reducing emissions.” Source: Paul Bodnar and Tamara Grbusic, [New York Times](#).

## **National Park System Issues**

Reports on climate and conservation issues impacting the parks, including the impacts of climate change, protection of native flora and fauna, battles against invasive and exotic species, impairment of park ecosystems and habitat, threats to park carrying capacity, impacts on parks from abutting areas, and systemic pollution of all forms.

- *Non-Native Species* – Mesa Verde continues in its efforts to remove non-native horses. The park has begun bait-trapping for wild horses as part of a long-term effort to habituate them for eventual capture, removal and adoption. As many as 80 “free-roaming” mustangs live and breed in the park, in violation of the park’s management plan, which prohibits livestock. The horses compete with elk, deer and bears for grazing and water resources. Last year, the park announced a decision for a phased, low-stress approach to gathering and removing the horses within five years. The project has been delayed because of restrictions from the coronavirus pandemic. Currently, horses are being lured to strategic areas with water troughs, then salt licks and hay. As they habituate to the bait, sections of corral fences are positioned, and trained professionals stand nearby to get them used to people. Eventually, a remote-triggered gate will close, trapping them. When captured, a second phase of removal and training begins to gentle the horses for adoption. Source: Jim Mimiaga, [Durango Herald](#).
- *Carrying Capacity* – Cyclists and pedestrians in Great Smoky Mountains will get to enjoy some extra daylight time on the Cades Cove Loop without vehicles this summer. The park implemented “vehicle-free Wednesdays” on June 17th and will continue them until September 30th. Each Wednesday, the Cades Cove Loop will be closed to traffic all day instead of just mornings so cyclists and pedestrians can safely enjoy recreation. The change is part of a pilot study. The park proposed the study due to congested parking areas and disruption of visitor services associated with the vehicle-free periods formerly held on Wednesday and Saturday mornings during the summer months over the past couple of decades. As part of the process, the park received feedback from more than 2,000 people from 37 states during the comment period, finding that 60% of people were supportive of the trial change and only 20% were opposed to it. About 15% wanted closures on Saturday mornings to continue, but most also supported full-day closures on Wednesday, as well. The park has been collecting data on these vehicle-free periods since 1995. Over the past 25 years, it said it has seen usage increase with up to 1,100 people a day cycling or walking along the roadway during the 3-hour closure periods. The increase usage has resulted in several challenges for the park, including congestion, lack of parking, and disruption in picnic and campground areas. Source: [WBIR News](#).
- *External Impacts* – A federal appeals court has upheld the suspension of the last two remaining oil and gas leases near the park. Oil and gas development in the Badger-Two Medicine region just outside the park has been tied up in lawsuits for years, with many other oil and gas companies abandoning plans to drill in the area, which is considered sacred to the Blackfoot Tribe and has since been designated a traditional cultural district. The company pursuing drilling, Solenex, was once represented by William Perry Pendley, now the acting head of the

Bureau of Land Management. The decision vacates the company's rights to the 6,200-acre lease. Source: Rebecca Beitsch, [The Hill](#).

- *Invasive Species* – *National Geographic* has posted a story to its web page entitled “National Parks Are Being Overrun By Invasive Species.” It opens with an account of efforts to stem the invasive coqui frogs in Hawaii Volcanoes, then goes on to talk about the overall problem of invasives in the NPS and the country at large: “Nationwide, more than 6,500 foreign species have moved into the U.S., collectively causing more damage to the environment, economy, and human health than all natural disasters combined, reports the U.S. Geological Society. The coqui is among hundreds of those species that have invaded the national parks—which were created for the central purpose of protecting and showcasing America’s natural heritage. ‘Half the parks have reported problems with invasive species,’ says Jennifer Sieracki, the Park Service’s invasive animals program coordinator. ‘But we suspect the vast majority of parks are affected.’ Introduced rats, quagga mussels, gypsy moths, lion fish, as well as feral hogs, goats, and cats are among the more than 300 animals on the parks’ most-wanted list of species to eradicate. But managing invasive species on 85 million acres of wilderness—from Hawaii’s lava-caked calderas and Alaska’s fjords to New Mexico’s Carlsbad Caverns and Florida’s Dry Tortugas—is a monumental task...[Critics] say the parks have barely begun to address the problem of invasive species on any significant scale. ‘Only 23 percent of national parks even have a plan for what they’re going to do about invasive species,’ says Ashley Dayer, an expert in conservation and social science at Virginia Tech University who lead a 2019 report examining the national parks’ management of invasive species. ‘And the issue is only going to get worse, partly because of climate change expanding the ranges of invasive species, and also because of increasing park visitation, creating the opportunity for more species introductions.’” Source: Rene Ebersole, [National Geographic](#).

## 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 at the end of each entry.

- *Great American Outdoors Act* – The Coalition issued a sign-on letter in support of the Great American Outdoors Act. It went out to all members via email, with a sign on deadline of July 7th. Here is the link to the letter. [Click here](#).
- *NEPA Waivers* – CPANP sent a letter to House Appropriators regarding President Trump's recent executive order that would allow more NEPA waivers on an emergency basis. We urged the appropriators to include language in the Fiscal Year 2021 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill that would prohibit the use of any federal funds to implement this EO. [Click here](#).
- *Mount Rushmore Fireworks* – In a recent article in the *Washington Post*, Coalition member and former Mount Rushmore superintendent Cheryl Schreier discussed the problems with resuming the Fourth of July fireworks display in the park. [Click here](#).

Source: Emily Thompson, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator.

## Park People

### **NPS Alumni**

#### **Dan Wenk Receives ASLA Honor Award**

Dan Wenk has received the prestigious Alfred B. LaGasse Medal for 2020 from the American Society of Landscape Architects. The award recognizes a landscape professional for his or her notable contributions to the management and conservancy of natural resources and public landscapes and for the breadth of her or his professional contributions to the preservation and enhancement of our country's cultural and natural resources. The citation reads as follows:

“Dan Wenk has proven himself a fearless champion for the wise management and conservation of our nation’s public landscapes. During his over 40 year career with the National Park Service (NPS) Dan’s personal and professional commitment to the ‘proper management of the nation’s public lands and the judicious use of the [country’s] natural (and cultural) resources,’ combined expertly with his deep understanding of the breadth and depth of landscape architecture, comprised the basis for all of his work. Dan completed his landscape architecture degree at Michigan State University. Soon after graduation, Dan joined the NPS as a landscape architect and successfully developed innovative solutions to some of the most challenging tasks at hand for the NPS.

“Dan served as superintendent of Mount Rushmore National Memorial, where he oversaw natural and cultural resource management programs to ensure the long-term preservation of the sculpture and the natural area of the surrounding forest. He later served as director of the NPS Denver Service Center, where he managed more than half a billion dollars in active construction projects. He was later appointed superintendent of Yellowstone National Park. Dan’s extensive portfolio of work has earned him numerous national awards, including the Department of the Interior Secretary’s Executive Leadership Award and the Meritorious Service Award.”

Selected by ASLA's Board of Trustees, the honors represent the highest recognition ASLA bestows each year.

Source: [American Society of Landscape Architects](#) via Don Fox.

## Mailbox

Mailbox consists of emails to the editor ([BHalainen@gmail.com](mailto:BHalainen@gmail.com)) on matters pertaining to this newsletter. All emails on issues entailing Coalition actions – proposed, ongoing or otherwise – should go to the Coalition’s main office in Washington (<https://protectnps.org/contact-us/>).

Dear Editor:

[The following letter concerns last week’s entry about the removal of the *Into The Wild* bus that has attracted so many hikers, a number of whom have died or had to be rescued]

The error [regarding its location in the park] likely lies with the *Army Times*, but as you may already know, the abandoned bus that was removed last week was located on state land, not "in the park's [DENA's] backcountry."

The finger of state land that extends west off the Parks Highway near Healy and is bordered on its north and west sides by Denali National Preserve lands and on its southern side by the park is known as the "Wolf Townships" by many Alaskans.

Thanks for clarifying -- otherwise readers may wonder about the lack of NEPA review prior to the bus removal, although perhaps they would attribute it to the Trump administration's anti-NEPA policies.

Cassie Thomas  
Anchorage, Alaska

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*Dear Cassie:*

*Thanks for the note – also to Sarah Hayes for sending a message to me on the same issue. The error was mine, resulting from an assumption that the bus was in the park based on the description of its location in the article – also the fact that rangers have been involved in past rescues of hikers trying to reach it. It’s a good reminder for me to read more carefully.*

*Editor*

## 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.

- *Glen Canyon NRA* – On June 22nd, rangers received a report of a man acting strangely in the Stanton Creek primitive camping area near Bullfrog. The man, later identified as Mark Cicero, had asked campers for food and a place to sleep. They provided Cicero with food, but refused to let him stay in their camp. Cicero then told the campers that he was in the Bullfrog area to "destroy a nucleus of cannibals", and that everyone there was in danger. Rangers subsequently found Cicero locked in one of the area's portable outhouses. Cicero told them that he was an angel who had been dispatched to Bullfrog to rid the area of "a nucleus of purple cannibal people." He further stated that he'd been able to sleep only 50 hours in the previous month because of his mission, and repeated the warning that everyone in the area was in danger from the purple cannibal people. He could not explain how he'd gotten to the area, or how he was going to carry out his mission; he had neither money nor transportation. Cicero was taken to the Bullfrog detention facility, where he agreed to voluntarily commit himself for a mental evaluation in St. George, Utah. He was transported out of the park the next morning. Submitted by Chief Ranger Tomie Lee.
- *Mount Rainier NP* – The concession manager at the Paradise Inn called the park's communications center on the evening of June 24th to report a disturbance in the hotel's lobby. James Rogers, 34, of Spanaway, Washington, had entered the hotel through the kitchen and had begun acting irrationally, shouting and threatening to blow up the mountain. Rogers was escorted from the inn by the manager. When he reached the parking lot, Rogers attempted to abduct a park visitor and force him into a vehicle. The visitor was able to break free, however, and fled back to the inn. Rogers then broke into a guest's car and attempted to hot-wire it before leaving the area in his own vehicle. Rangers pursued him, but Rogers refused to stop. The chase continued outside the park until local officers stopped Rogers by flattening his vehicle's tires on a highway near Eatonville. Rogers then held two wires, claiming they were attached to a bomb, and commandeered a state patrol vehicle in an attempt to flee the area. Troopers again flattened the vehicle's tires, and were able to subdue and arrest Rogers. Due to earlier threats to blow something up and the fact that wires and blasting caps were recovered at the scene of the arrest, Paradise Inn guests were evacuated to the concession facilities in the visitor center until the inn could be secured. Members of the explosive ordnance disposal team from Fort Lewis searched the inn and the Rainier Mountaineering guide house. No bomb was found, and visitors were permitted to return to their rooms. Rogers is being held in the county jail until charges can be filed against him. The FBI is assisting in the investigation. Submitted by Lance Gillespie.
- *Yellowstone NP* – Two cousins, ages 9 and 10 respectively, were reported missing from the Canyon campground just after noon on June 22nd. An aggressive search effort was initiated which continued through the night. Few clues were found in the search area, which consisted of rolling terrain covered by dense lodgepole forest and many downed trees. Afternoon showers and below freezing nighttime temperatures contributed to the urgency of the search; by mid-day on June 23rd, about 170 personnel from nine agencies and nine search dog teams had been deployed. A team comprised of a dog, its handler and a ranger found the two girls that afternoon while rechecking a segment of the search area about three miles north of the campground. They were cold, wet, tired, hungry and thirsty, but otherwise in good condition. Although they'd travelled a considerable distance from the campground, considering terrain and elevation gain, they'd remained in the same location since the previous afternoon. When they realized that they were lost, they occasionally walked across patches of snow to try and leave tracks. During the night, they covered themselves with branches to keep warm. This happy ending would not have been possible without the responsiveness and considerable

assistance provided by the park's neighboring federal, state and county agencies and volunteer organizations. Submitted by Assistant Chief Ranger Mike Murray.

## **A Closing Observation**

“I wish I could stand before you and say that my own generation had brought strength and meaning to man’s relation to nature, that we had looked upon the majesty and beauty and terror of the earth we inhabit and learned wisdom and humility. Alas, this cannot be said, for it is we who have brought into being a fateful and destructive power. But the stream of time moves forward and mankind moves with it. Your generation must come to terms with the environment. Your generation must face realities instead of taking refuge in ignorance and evasion of truth. Yours is a grave and a sobering responsibility, but it is also a shining opportunity. You go out into a world where mankind is challenged, as it has never been challenged before, to prove its maturity and its mastery—not of nature, but of itself. Therein lies our hope and our destiny.”

Rachel Carson, speaking at the Scripps Institute in California in 1962

## **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: Larry Hilaire, Cassie Thomas, Don Fox, Bob Martin, Mark Forbes, Sarah Hayes, Bill Walters, Cathy Halainen, Ann Rasor

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.”

To receive a copy of this free publication, join or support the coalition. Any current, retired or former salaried employee (GS, wage grade, seasonal, temporary, or SES) of the National Park Service can join the Coalition ([click on this link](#)). Coalition supporters can also join and receive the newsletter ([click on this link](#)). If you need to contact the Coalition office on other matters, including changes of address, [click on this link](#).

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