The Coalition Weekly Report
Wednesday, August 19, 2020

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Incidents

Grand Teton NP
Climber Survives 30-Foot Fall Into Crevasse

A climber survived a serious fall into a crevasse thanks to fellow climbers who came to his aid and likely saved his life.

Tyler Willis, 34, of Evanston, Wyoming, and his partner had summited Mount Owen and were heading back down the mountain via the Koven Route across Teton Glacier when Willis fell about 30 feet into a crevasse. Two other climbers were in the area and used their satellite communication device to call for help, then set anchors and used a roping system to haul Willis from the crevasse.

The Teton Interagency Dispatch Center received a "fall into crevasse" notification from a satellite communication device around 10:30 p.m. on Friday, August 7th. The message included some GPS coordinates that indicated the incident was near the Teton Glacier. Attempts to establish two-way communications with the reporting party proved fruitless. Two rangers began hiking to Teton Glacier at approximately 12:30 a.m. Saturday, and at 4 a.m. located Willis and his hiking partner, along with another climbing party of two that was in the area and assisting him.

Willis had been in the crevasse for over an hour before the other two climbers came on scene to assist. His condition had significantly deteriorated due to hypothermia and he was unresponsive. After pulling Willis from the crevasse, the three climbers replaced his wet clothing with dry clothing. When the climbing rangers arrived on scene, they provided medical care and began a rewarming treatment, including adding additional insulating layers to warm him. Willis' condition slowly improved over the next few hours.

At approximately 8 a.m. Saturday, Willis was transported via short haul rescue by the Teton Interagency Helicopter to Lupine Meadows and then flown via Air Idaho Rescue to Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center in Idaho Falls. The three other climbers were transported to Lupine Meadows by helicopter.

Source: *National Parks Traveler*.

Joshua Tree NP
Hiker Rescued After 40-Hour Ordeal

Robert Ringo was hiking in the park in late July when he fell and broke his femur. In excruciating pain, he couldn't get himself out of the rocky terrain he found himself in.

Ringo spent 40 hours in the desert, waiting for help, during which time he recorded himself yelling for help and talking about being stranded.

But Ringo had done all the right things before leaving for his hike – he tagged his location and shared it with his son and brought two liters of water with him. He ate juniper berries to survive. After nearly two days, Ringo was finally found by searchers, who airlifted him to a hospital.

Ringo says he looks forward to hiking again once his broken leg heals.

Source: CBS News.

Glacier NP
Climber Falls To His Death From Dragon's Tail

A 20-year-old man died in a climbing accident on the evening of July 21st when he fell from a ridge known as the Dragon's Tail, a steep, off-trail climbing route southwest of Mount Reynolds near Logan Pass.

The climber fell several hundred feet toward Hidden Lake around 7:30 p.m. Search and rescue efforts began immediately after park dispatchers received a report of the accident. Two Bear Air located the man, determined he was deceased, and recovered the body.

The standard climbing route up Dragon's Tail begins from the saddle with Mount Reynolds and goes up the east face to the 8,580-foot summit. The mountain's northwest face is a sheer drop to Hidden Lake.

Source: *Daily Inter Lake*.

Rocky Mountain NP
Hiker Rescued After Accidentally Shooting Himself

The 70-year-old man was hiking in the Emerald Lake area of the park with a handgun in his backpack on July 27th. When he set the pack on a rock, the gun fired. The round struck him in his leg, but did not exit his body.

Bystanders rushed to help the man, giving him first aid. Search and rescue team members then provided advanced medical care and carried him out on a wheeled litter. He was taken in an ambulance to a trailhead and airlifted to the Medical Center of the Rockies.

Source: Maddie Capron, *Sacramento Bee*.

National Park System
Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents

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

- *Carlsbad Caverns NP* – The district attorney's investigation into the shooting death of Charles Lorentz by ranger Robert Mitchell has resulted in a determination that Mitchell's actions were "objectively justifiable." The court therefore declined to prosecute him. For details on the sequence of events that led to the shooting, see the article below. Lorentz's family is hoping there will be federal criminal prosecution. The United States Attorney's Office, District of New Mexico, is reviewing this incident. Source: Mike Smith, *Carlsbad Current-Argus*.

- *Mount Rainier NP* – A body found on August 3rd is believed to be that of hiker Talal Sabbagh, 27, who's been missing since June. The man's body was found in an off-trail drainage near Paradise. Sabbagh had planned to hike around Paradise on June 21st, but never returned. Rangers are continuing the search for a second missing hiker, Vincent Djie, 25, who vanished

around June 19th while hiking the Van Trump Trail toward Mildred Point near Longmire. Source: KOMO News.

- *Glacier NP* – Efforts to find Barry Tragen, 68, who has not been seen since he parked his car near Kintla Lake on July 22nd, have transitioned to a limited continuous search. An interagency search was begun three days later. No sign of Tragen was found until August 4th, when searchers came across sunglasses likely belonging to him in Kintla Creek. Search dogs came to the area and were "showing interest" near the outlet of Kintla Lake, but investigators have seen no additional signs of the man. At its height, the search for Tragen included personnel from the park, the NPS Investigative Services Branch, the FBI and local search and rescue teams, including Two Bear Air Rescue. After the sunglasses were found, officials used a remote-operated underwater vehicle to probe Kintla Lake, in addition to air, ground and above-water resources. Source: Andy Viano, *Flathead Beacon*.

- *Buffalo NR* – The family of a Branson man shot and killed by rangers while camping near the river three years ago is suing the federal government. Attorneys have filed a Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) lawsuit against the United States/Buffalo National River. Arkansas prosecutors decided not to charge the two park rangers in the shooting that killed Bolger. Investigators say he was armed with a pistol and was shot after he pointed it at the officers. Source: Frances Watson, KYTV News.

- *Cape Hatteras NS* – Richard Perrot, who was arrested last August for puncturing vehicle tires, was recently found guilty on six counts of vandalism. He is awaiting sentencing, which is scheduled in September. Perrot was arrested and charged with four counts of vandalism on August 11, 2019, after he vandalized a vehicle by puncturing its tires at Ramp 23. Perrot was also charged with two counts of vandalism of a motor vehicle by puncturing tires in an incident at Coquina Beach on August 9, 2019. Each of these charges carries up to six months of imprisonment, a $5,000 fine, up to one-year supervised release, and/or up to five years of probation. According to the investigation, rangers responded to 18 separate incidents of vehicles having their tires slashed last July and August. In several incidents, Perrot and/or his vehicle were observed in the same parking lot as the vandalized vehicles. Source: *Coastland Times*.

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center
Fifty-One Large Fires Now Burning Nationwide

The national preparedness level remains at PL 4, the next to highest preparedness level.

Sixteen new large fires were reported on Monday, eight of them in California. Nationally, 51 large fires have burned 440,478 acres in 14 states. More than 11,100 wildland firefighters and support personnel are assigned to wildfires across the country.

Park And Park-Related Fires

- *Lava Beds NM* – The park, which has been closed since July 23 due to the proximity of the Caldwell Fire, part of the July Complex, partially reopened last Friday. The fire is now contained, but 70% of the monument has burned. The park's structures remained intact, though some minor infrastructure was destroyed. The following facilities are now open to the public – the visitor center, Cave Loop Road, Merrill Cave, Fleener Chimneys, and the road to Medicine Lake (Forest Road 49). The following park locations will remain closed until further notice – Indian Well Campground, Captain Jack's Stronghold, Skull Cave, Schonchin Butte, Balcony/Boulevard Caves and Trail, Black Crater/Thomas-Wright Battlefield Trail, Valentine Cave, the park road south of the visitor center, access from Forest Road 10 to the park's southern boundary, and the Lyon's, Three Sisters, and Bunchgrass Trailheads For more information, go to the relevant InciWeb web page and to Lava Beds NM.

- *Mojave NP* – The 25,000-acre Dome Fire is burning in brush and tall grass seven miles northwest of Cima, California. Extreme fire behavior is being reported. Area, road and trail closures are in effect. Ivanpah Road, Cima Road, Morningstar Mine Road, and Kelso-Cima Road are closed due to fire activity; Kelbaker Road is open. For more information, go to Mojave NP.

Resource Commitment Trend

Category	July 28	August 4	August 11
Area Command Teams	0	0	0
NIMO Teams	1	1	1
Type 1 Teams	3	1	6
Type 2 Teams	4	8	6
Crews	203	278	226
Engines	657	906	802
Helicopters	71	113	132
Total FF/Overhead	9,520	12,747	11,158

Fires/Acreage

Category	2010-2019 Ave	2020 Total	Difference
United States: YTD Fires	39,392	36,101	– 3,291
United States: YTD Acres	4,746,785	2,411,931	– 2,334, 854

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

August 4 – The president signed into law H.R. 1957 (the Great American Outdoors Act), to establish, fund, and provide for the use of amounts in a National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund to address the maintenance backlog of the National Park Service, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, and the Bureau of Indian Education, and to provide permanent, dedicated funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. (Public Law 116–152).

Senate Actions

July 23 (Update) – The Senate passed S. 4049, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2021 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, and to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, by a vote of 86 yeas to 14 nays. Since the time this was first noted in the coalition report a couple of weeks ago, the text of the bill passed by the Senate was made available. Of interest to the National Park Service is Division B, Title XVIII, Subtitle E, Sec. 2887, which authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to pay from the NPS national recreation and preservation account, the remaining $1 million of the endowment established at the Oklahoma City National Memorial when it was first authorized. The law

establishing the memorial in 1997 authorized an endowment to pay for the NPS presence at the site, along with the other costs of the memorial, with the requirement that non-federal funds match each dollar of federal funds. However, when the Oklahoma City Memorial Foundation, which operates the site, objected to the requirements of being part of the park system, it worked with the Oklahoma congressional delegation to deauthorize the memorial as a unit of the park system and to make it an affiliated area in 2004, despite NPS objections at the time and a lack of consultation with NPS. The foundation also got a provision in that new law to require NPS to pay for the its park rangers at the site. So far, Congress has appropriated $4 million of the authorized $5 million of the endowment and recent news reports stated that the foundation believes it is owed the final $1 million of the authorized money. The House version of the defense authorization bill has a different provision about this issue, which is mentioned in the July 21 update below.

August 4 – The Committee on the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution held a hearing to examine the right of the people peaceably to assemble, focusing on protecting speech by stopping violence, after receiving testimony from Senators Wyden and Merkley; Erin Neely Cox, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Texas, Department of Justice; Ken Cuccinelli, Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Deputy Secretary, Department of Homeland Security; and public witnesses.

August 6 – The Senate agreed to S. Res. 668, commemorating the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center's 50th Anniversary.

August 8 – The Senate passed S.J. Res. 74, requesting the Secretary of the Interior to authorize a unique and one-time arrangement to commemorate the centennial of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution entitled "Look Up To Her at Mount Rushmore" with a display of historical artifacts, digital content, film footage, and associated historical audio and imagery in and around the vicinity of the Mount Rushmore National Memorial in South Dakota for 14 nights of public display during August 18-September 30, 2020.

August 10 – The Senate passed S. 1014, to establish the Route 66 Centennial Commission.

House Actions

July 21 (Update) – The House passed H.R. 6395, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2021 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, and to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, by a vote of 295 yeas to 125 nays. Since the time this was first noted in the coalition report a couple of weeks ago, the text of the bill passed by the House was made available. The following provisions are of interest to the National Park Service:

Division A

Title VI, Subtitle C

- Sec. 626, directs the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture to make the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass available at no cost to members of Gold Star Families.
- Sec. 627, authorizes the Society of the First Infantry Division to modify the First Division Monument located on federal land in President's Park, District of Columbia, to honor members of the First Infantry Division of the U.S. Army who died during U.S. operations, including Operation Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Title XVIII, Subtitle A

- Sec. 1710F, requires the Secretary of the Interior to provide Congress with a report on the status of the non-federal funding that has been raised for the Oklahoma City National Memorial. Unlike the Senate version of the defense authorization bill mentioned in the July 23 update above, this version only requires a report on the funding situation at the memorial.

Title XVIII, Subtitle E

- Sec. 1775, expresses the support of the House for ``National Borinqueneers Day''. The Borinqueneers is the nickname of the 65th Infantry Regiment of the U.S. Army during the Korean War, which is from the original Taino Indian name for Puerto Rico (Borinquen). The regiment was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal on April 13, 2016.
- Sec. 1777, authorizes the Secretary of Defense to contribute $5 million to the national maritime heritage grants program run by the National Park Service.
- Sec. 1795, requires the Secretary of Defense to authorize the inclusion of the names of the 74 crew members of the *U.S.S. Frank Evans* killed on June 3, 1969, to be included on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Division O

Title I, Sec. 20102

- Designates a small amount of wilderness in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park.

Title II

- Section 20212, authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to undertake initiatives to restore degraded redwood forest ecosystems in Redwood National and State Parks in partnership with the State of California, local agencies, and nongovernmental organizations.
- Section 20215, authorizes the establishment of a visitor center in Del Norte County, California, to assist in fulfilling the purposes of Redwood National and State Parks and the Smith River National Recreation Area.
- Section 20217, requires the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to evaluate the feasibility and suitability of establishing overnight accommodations on Federal land at the southern and northern boundaries or on land within 20 miles of the southern and northern boundaries of Redwood National and State parks in consultation with interested Federal, State, Tribal, and local entities, and private and nonprofit organizations.
- Section 20233, designates, among other areas, approximately 31,000 acres in Redwood National Park as potential wilderness.
- Section 20234, designates, among other river segments, three segments of rivers in Redwood National Park as part of the wild and scenic rivers system.

Title IV

- Establishes the San Gabriel National Recreation Area in the State of California as a unit of the National Park System.

Title V

- Adjusts the boundary of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area to include the Rim of the Valley Corridor consisting of 191,000 acres.

Title VI

- Designates certain rivers within Olympic National Park as wild and scenic rivers.

Division P

Title I, Sec. 21109

- Removes a 15.5-acre parcel of land from potential wilderness within Rocky Mountain National Park.

Title IV

- Establishes in statute the Curecanti National Recreation Area in Colorado. Curecanti NRA is one of just a couple of National Park System units that have never been legislatively established by Congress. Currently, the NRA is managed under a cooperative agreement between the NPS and the Bureau of Reclamation.

August 5 – The Committee on Oversight and Reform held a hearing entitled ``The Devastating Health Impacts of Climate Change''. Testimony was heard from public witnesses. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

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.

- *Acting Director Vela Departs* – On August 7th, Dave Vela, who's been serving as deputy director exercising the authority of the director, announced that he was retiring following 30 years of service in an email message sent to all employees. He said he was honored to have worked for "our beloved agency" and its employee and offered this admonition: "Over the course of our 104-year history, we have never turned our backs on the challenges and opportunities facing the National Park Service. And, we will not change our mission, who we are and what we fundamentally believe in as we embrace our operational realities in a second century of service…One of my favorite quotes is from President Theodore Roosevelt when he stated, 'People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.' It is my hope and prayer, that you will always know that my passion was always your safety and care…I will never be able to adequately put into words how proud I am of you - whether a volunteer, seasonal or permanent employee. Whatever success I can claim in my over 30 years in the NPS is because of you - my colleagues. Thanks for the opportunity to serve on the front lines with you, and know that you continue to make me proud!" You can read the full text of his announcement at this web address. Source: National Park Service.

- *Margaret Everson Succeeds Vela* – Margaret Everson, principal deputy director of the Fish and Wildlife Service and a counselor to Interior Secretary David Bernhardt, has been named as Vela's successor. Everson worked as chief policy officer for Ducks Unlimited for four years before joining the Fish and Wildlife Service. She received her bachelor's degree in biology, with a concentration in marine biology, from St. Francis College in 1996 and her law degree from Vermont Law School in 2001. Before joining Ducks Unlimited, she worked as a consultant for state agencies, as an assistant attorney general of Kentucky and as general counsel for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. From 2006 to 2008, Everson worked as counselor to then-FWS Director Dale Hall. She also worked for the Interior solicitor's office for four years. At Ducks Unlimited, she championed efforts that included the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. Source: Rob Hotakainen and Michael Doyle, *E&E News*

- *Great American Outdoors Act* – On August 4th, the long-awaited Great American Outdoors Act was signed into law. This landmark conservation act will use revenues from energy development to provide up to $1.9 billion a year for five years to provide needed maintenance for critical facilities and infrastructure in our national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, recreation areas, and American Indian schools. It will also use royalties from offshore oil and natural gas to permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund to the tune of $900 million a year to invest in conservation and recreation opportunities across the country. The National Parks and Public Lands Restoration Fund, also part of the act, will provide funding for priority projects that address the maintenance backlog at NPS facilities, including

campgrounds, picnic areas, roads, trails, and other critical infrastructure. Source: 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.

- *Gettysburg NMP* – Panels will soon be installed near each of 12 Confederate state monuments in order to provide visitors with more context to understand when and under what circumstances they were erected. The park expects the panels to be added by September. They will be located near the Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia state monuments. This move is partially a response by the park service to the recent national conversations about what should be done with Confederate monuments across the country. Source: By Nolan Simmons, PennLive.com.

- *Grand Teton NP* – A new animal attack response team will rescue people attacked by grizzly bears in the northwestern Wyoming backcountry. The park, Teton County Sheriff's Office, Teton County Search and Rescue, and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department are behind the effort. Grizzly attacks in Wyoming often involve elk hunters, so hopes are that the team will be ready to go when hunting season begins in September. It's becoming more common for several different agencies to get called to attacks. With both more people and bears in the backcountry, grizzly attacks have been increasing. They included a hunting guide killed on a mountain two years ago. Teams in Alaska and British Columbia provided a model for the new Wyoming team. Source: Associated Press.

- *Lake Mead NRA* – The park has selected two companies to provide guided technical dives to a submerged World War II B-29 under Lake Mead. The companies are Las Vegas Scuba, LLC and Scuba Training and Technology Inc. The B-29 Superfortress crashed into Lake Mead on July 21, 1948. The crew of five survived, but the plane has remained submerged ever since. The companies are allowed 100 guided client dives to the site each year for the next two years. To dive on the site, you must be part of a permitted tour. Source: Kristen DeSilva, KVVU News.

- *Mount Rainier NP* – The park is in the process of formulating a visitor use management plan for the Nisqually to Paradise road corridor. "This plan is needed to meet the changing needs of park visitors and to support positive visitor experiences in a sustainable manner," says the park in its PEPC narrative. "Mount Rainier grows in popularity each year and experienced a 30% increase in visitation between 2008 and 2018. In fact, 70% of annual visitation occurs between July and September, and most use is concentrated in a small number of destinations such as Paradise and the Paradise-area trails. While the park has evaluated some transportation and congestion challenges occurring over the last decade, this corridor management plan is needed to [deal with] roadway congestion on Highway 706 and Paradise Road. Visitors currently experience wait times of more than an hour to enter the park through the Nisqually Entrance Station on busy days, causing congestion both inside and outside of the park. Roadway congestion also occurs within the park at popular trailheads, which leads to parking in undesignated areas and pedestrian safety concerns due to limited roadway visibility. Reducing congestion will enhance visitor experience of this historic roadway and improve visitor access to recreation opportunities." Comments are being taken until October 5th at the following website. Source: Mount Rainier NP.

- *Shenandoah NP* – A ribbon cutting event for a new parking lot at the base of Old Rag Mountain was held earlier this month. The lot offers improved access to the Old Rag area hiking trails and allows visitors to remain in the park without having to hike along a highway to get to the trails. Previously, visitors would park in a leased lot further down the road and then have to trek to the trails. The situation caused safety issues as well as issues with those who live in the area – the lot was limited to 250 vehicles and often cars would line the roadway, making travel

difficult. Earlier this spring, the road was shut down to non-local traffic due to the number of visitors flocking to the trails just prior to the park's COVID-19 closure. The new lot solves those issues, as well as guarantees access in perpetuity. Source: Gracie Hart Brooks, *Madison Eagle*.

Briefly Noted

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

- *NPS PSA On Grizzly Bears* – On August 5th, *Cowboy State Daily*, a Wyoming newspaper, ran an article on a new NPS PSA with this headline: "National Park Service Recommends Not Pushing Your Friend Down in Case of Bear Attack." The newspaper approved the Service's humorous approach to this issue: "You have to admire any government agency that steps away from standard government language to deliver a message that people may actually read. The National Park Service did that today in a Facebook post designed to help people not get mauled by bears. It's a problem. Grizzly bear attacks, for example, are running at historic highs for this time of season in the Greater Yellowstone Region. So the National Park Service put together some tips — interspersed with much-needed humor — to help novices who really don't belong out in the wilderness anyway." The paper cites its favorite passage: "Please don't run from bears or push your slower friends down in attempts of saving yourself… Do NOT push down a slower friend (even if you think the friendship has run its course)." The PSA can be found online at this Facebook address. Source: *Cowboy State Daily*.

- *National Seashores And Lakeshores* – Last week, the *New York Times* ran eight "wild, protected coastlines" worth visiting – all NPS areas. "Despite the breathing room offered by the Great Outdoors, many of the 419 National Park Service areas have sites that are not conducive to social distancing. Many parks concentrate the public along narrow trails leading to crowded geysers, waterfalls, wildlife-viewing stands or other scenic vistas. Yet there are notable exceptions. In particular, 13 national seashores and lakeshores offer a completely different experience. While these federally protected coastlines collectively attract millions of visitors each year, the primary attraction is water and uncrowded stretches of sand that invite picnics, water activities and social distancing." The eight sites highlighted are Cape Cod NS, Assateague Island NS, Cape Lookout NS, Cumberland Island NS, Gulf Islands NS, Padre Island NS, Pictured Rocks NL, and Point Reyes NS. Source: Jon Waterman, *New York Times*.

- *Great Outdoors Act Campaign Video* – The president's reelection campaign has produced a 90-second video entitled "Protecting our National Parks, Public Lands for Future Generations." Although the legislation was the work of many over a number of years and the president's only involvement was to sign the bill, the video says that the president "called on Congress to protect our national parks and federal lands for our children and grandchildren." You can see the video on YouTube at this link. Source: Member Steve Hastings.

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.

- *Hurricane Season Forecast Revised Upward* – The 2020 Atlantic hurricane season has gotten off to a quick start, with a record-setting nine named storms so far, and has the potential to be one of the busiest on record. Historically, only two named storms form on average by early August, and the ninth named storm typically does not form until October 4th. An average season produces a dozen named storms, including six hurricanes of which three become major hurricanes (Category 3, 4, or 5). The updated outlook calls for 19 to 25 named storms (winds of 39 mph or greater), of which between 7 and 11 will become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or

greater), including 3 to 6 major hurricanes (winds of 111 mph or greater). Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

- *Gulf Of Mexico "Dead Zone" Forecast Issued* – NOAA scientists have forecast that the 2020 summer Gulf of Mexico hypoxic area or "dead zone" – an area of low to no oxygen that can kill fish and other marine life – will cover approximately 6,700 square miles. That's larger than the long-term average size of 5,387 square miles but substantially less than the record of 8,776 square miles set in 2017. A monitoring survey, scheduled for later this summer, will confirm the size of the 2020 dead zone, and is a key test of the accuracy of NOAA's models. The Gulf of Mexico dead zone occurs every summer. It's primarily caused by excess nutrient pollution from human activities in urban and agricultural areas throughout the Mississippi River watershed. When the excess nutrients reach the Gulf, they stimulate an overgrowth of algae, which eventually die and decompose, depleting oxygen as they sink to the bottom. The resulting low oxygen levels near the bottom of the Gulf cannot support most marine life. Fish, shrimp and crabs often swim out of the area, but animals that are unable to swim or move away are stressed or killed by the low oxygen. Source: EarthSky.

- *Rising Seas Could Menace Millions Beyond Shorelines* – "A new study (click here for link to report) published [on July 30th] finds that much of the economic harm from sea-level rise this century is likely to come from an additional threat that will arrive even faster: As oceans rise, powerful coastal storms, crashing waves and extreme high tides will be able to reach farther inland, putting tens of millions more people and trillions of dollars in assets worldwide at risk of periodic flooding," reports the *New York Times*. "The study, published in the journal *Scientific Reports*, calculated that up to 171 million people living today face at least some risk of coastal flooding from extreme high tides or storm surges, created when strong winds from hurricanes or other storms pile up ocean water and push it onshore. While many people are currently protected by sea walls or other defenses, such as those in the Netherlands, not everyone is." The report includes issues pertinent to the United States: "There are already signs that periodic flooding is wreaking havoc along coastlines. A July analysis from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration found that high-tide flooding in cities along the Atlantic and Gulf Coast has increased fivefold since 2000, a shift that is damaging homes, imperiling drinking-water supplies and inundating roads." Source: Brad Plumer, *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.

Climate Change

- *Death Valley NP* – In the midst of a historic heat wave in the West, the temperature in Death Valley reached 130 degrees on the afternoon of Sunday, August 16th, possibly setting a world record for the highest temperature ever observed during the month of August. If the temperature is valid, it would also rank among the top-three highest temperatures ever reliably measured on the planet at any time and may, in fact, be the highest. The temperature in Death Valley hit 130 degrees at 3:41 p.m. Pacific time on Sunday, according to the National Weather Service. If verified, the reading would break Death Valley's previous August record by three degrees. Source: Jason Samenow, *Washington Post*.

Native Species

- *Systemwide* – "A federal judge in New York has invalidated rule changes by the Trump administration that allowed individuals and corporations to kill scores of birds as long as they could prove they did not intentionally set out to do so," reports the *Washington Post*. "In a blistering ruling that cited Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*" U.S. District Judge Valerie E.

Caproni ripped the administration's interpretation of 'takings' and 'killings' of birds under the century-old Migratory Bird Treaty Act as applying only if the animals are specifically targeted. Tuesday's ruling was the latest legal setback for the Trump administration as it has systematically tried to weaken or nullify scores of federal environmental protections. In her decision, Caproni said the administration had gone too far….[She] determined that allowing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service police to enforce the act only if officials could prove intent was a violation of the federal Administrative Procedure Act and vacated the changes. In striking down the rule change, she admonished the Interior Department with a passage from *To Kill a Mockingbird*…'It is not only a sin to kill a mockingbird, it is also a crime,' Caproni wrote. 'That has been the letter of the law for the past century. But if the Department of the Interior has its way, many mockingbirds and other migratory birds that delight people and support ecosystems throughout the country will be killed without legal consequence.'" Source: Darryl Fears, *Washington Post*.

Non-Native Species and Invasives

- *Everglades NP* – The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the South Florida Water Management District, along with outside support, have removed 5,000 pythons from the Everglades ecosystem, reports *National Parks Traveler*: "That number represents an incredible improvement in capturing the snakes, as it was just last September when officials said the running tally of removed pythons reached 900. 'We've learned through the Python Challenge that experience counts when finding and removing Burmese pythons,' said Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission member Rodney Barreto. 'We can't win the battle alone. It's one team, one mission. We need the support of these experienced python hunters as well as the partnership with the South Florida Water Management District.' According to South Florida Water Management District Board Member Ron Bergeron, 'Every snake counts. Each invasive python eliminated represents hundreds of native Florida wildlife saved.'" Source: *National Parks Traveler*.

Ecosystems and Habitat

- *Zion NP* – The park is warning visitors not to swim or wade in the Virgin River after the water tested positive for a toxin caused by cyanobacteria. According to EPA, cyanobacteria or blue-green algae often occurs in calm and nutrient-rich water. Some species of cyanobacteria produce toxins that can make people and animals sick. Algal blooms in Utah lakes forced health officials to issue several warnings to state residents in the past few years. Signs in the park now warn visitors not to swim, submerge themselves, or allow pets to get in the water or drink it. The park first learned about the cyanotoxin in the Virgin River when a dog died on July 4th about an hour after swimming in the river's North Fork. Source: KSL News.

Systemic Pollution

- *Systemwide* – A citizen science program that began over a decade ago has confirmed the use of dragonflies to measure mercury pollution, according to a study in *Environmental Science & Technology* (click here to see study). The national research effort, which grew from a regional project to collect dragonfly larvae, found that the young form of the insect predator can be used as a "biosentinel" to indicate the amount of mercury that is present in fish, amphibians and birds. The study includes data from thousands of larval dragonfly specimens collected from nearly 500 locations across 100 sites within the National Park System. As part of the decade-long study, researchers came up with the first-ever survey of mercury pollution within the NPS. The researchers found that about two-thirds of the aquatic sites studied within the national parks are polluted with moderate-to-extreme levels of mercury. The finding of mercury within park sites is not an indicator that the source of pollution is in the parks themselves. Mercury is distributed widely within the atmosphere and is deposited in the protected areas as it is in other water bodies across the country. Given that the parks studied stretch across the entire U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii, the findings reflect levels of mercury throughout the country. Source: EurekAlert!

Carrying Capacity

- *Bryce Canyon NP* – The park is asking for public input on an effort to improve the popular Mossy Cave area and mitigate the effects of overtourism, as visitor numbers have soared in recent years. Overall increased visitation to the park plus "a surge in social media postings" have increased visitation by 20% since last June, with thousands visiting this small area. Concerns about the area include parking, people walking along the highway, trampling of vegetation along the trail, and litter. Source: K. Sophie Will, *St. George Spectrum & Daily News*.

Developments and Intrusions

- *Denali NP&P* – DOI has approved a right of way for a gas pipeline project that will pass through the park. Permits will be issued to allow the Alaska Liquified Natural Gas (Alaska LNG) Pipeline Project, which allow the construction of the line through park and BLM land. The action adopts the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's EIS, establishing environmental protections for wetlands, wildlife, recreation access and other resources. The NPS ROW will be for an approximately six-mile portion of pipeline within a non-wilderness. The route selected through the park is near the existing transportation corridor (the Parks Highway and Alaska Railroad extend across this area of the park), which limits impacts to park viewsheds and overall acreage of wetlands, and reduces the need for additional roads and their associated impacts. The Denali National Park Improvement Act of 2013, as amended by the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019, authorized a right-of-way permit for the natural gas transmission pipeline in non-wilderness areas within Denali. The NPS may only issue a right-of-way permit consistent with the laws and regulations governing these right-of-way permits in the national park system, and only if the right-of-way is the route through Denali Park with the least adverse environmental effects. Source: *Sierra Sun-Times*

- *Blue Ridge Parkway* – Late last month, the NPS announced that it will issue a new permit for the $5.7 billion Mountain Valley Pipeline that will permit it to cross the parkway. This is the first of three federal permits that must be reissued before the natural gas pipeline can be completed; additional lawsuits and legal delays are expected before any work can be done. Mountain Valley Pipeline has said that the project is 92% complete and that it intends to complete the construction early next year. The park ruled that the pipeline can cross the parkway atop Bent Mountain in Roanoke County in western Virginia. Source: Kallanish Energy.

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.

- *Great American Outdoors Act* – Coalition Chair Phil Francis spoke with *National Parks Traveler* about what comes next now that this landmark piece of legislation has been signed. Executive Council Member Mike Murray also spoke with *National Parks Traveler* this week, weighing in on the Act and on the news roundup from our parks on a recent podcast.

- *BLM Director Nomination* – CPANP signed on to a letter sent to the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee on behalf of over 300 organizations, tribes, and businesses, urging the committee to reject the nomination of William Perry Pendley for director of the Bureau of Land Management. Pendley's public record over decades both in and outside of government has made it abundantly clear that he is unfit to lead any government agency and particularly BLM.

- *Webinar* – The Coalition hosted a webinar on oil and gas leasing and its impacts on our national parks and public lands. This episode is part of our larger " Take Action" series, where we will explore timely topics related to the preservation and protection of the parks, places, and programs of the NPS. The webinar was hosted by Amy Fehir and featured Matt Kirby, the

Director of Energy and Landscape Conservation in the Southwest for the National Parks Conservation Association, Mike Murray, and Emily Thompson.

Source: Emily Thompson, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator.

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.

- *Apostle Islands NL* – On August 5th, volunteer lighthouse keepers on Devils Island reported that men on a sailboat anchored offshore were shooting at them with a red and white rifle. Although forced to take cover, the volunteers were able to provide a full description of the vessel, including its name. Rangers intercepted the boat, with backup assistance from the Coast Guard, and discovered that the rifle was in fact a homemade "potato cannon" - a device constructed from PVC pipe which employs combustible hair spray as a propellant to fire raw potatoes with considerable force to a distance of up to 200 yards. Charles Pugh, 40, and Peter Byrnes, 38, both from Minnesota, admitted firing toward the island and were cited for disorderly conduct. Initial research indicates that this may be the first naval bombardment of a shore installation on the Great Lakes since the War of 1812. Submitted by District Ranger Bob Mackreth.

- *Kalaupapa NHP* – Interment ceremonies were held on July 22nd for a relic of the beatified Belgian Catholic priest Joseph De Veuster, known as Blessed Damien. Damien served those inflicted with leprosy in Kalaupapa from 1873 to 1889, when he died of the disease and was buried in Kalawao. Damien's remains were exhumed in 1936 and interred in his home town in Belgium. He was beatified by Pope John Paul in June. Over 530 visitors attended the reinterment ceremony. An estimated 140 of them hiked two and a half miles down the 1,600-foot trail into the park. The park's staff was assisted by rangers from all of Hawaii's national parks and representatives from state DNR, local police and fire agencies, DOT and the FAA. There were five minor medical incidents, two minor aircraft mishaps (it took over 100 flights to transport all parties to the site), and one minor accident during the event. Submitted by Incident Commander Eric Beckert,

- *Mount Rushmore NP* – The annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, which was held in the Black Hills last week, had a significant impact on both visitation and operations at Mount Rushmore and other area parks. As of last last Thursday, over 41,000 bikers had visited the park - all in addition to normal visitation. Traffic was highly congested, and there were numerous law enforcement, EMS and visitor service incidents. Members of more than 20 outlaw biker gangs have been seen in the park. Rally organizers estimated that as many as 200,000 bikers would be in the Black Hills during the week, making this the biggest biker rally in the nation. The rally officially began on August 6th and ended on August 13th. Submitted by Chief Ranger Mike Pflaum.

A Closing Observation

"The abiding purpose of a national park is to bring man and his environment into closer harmony. The ultimate hope that a delicate balance between preservation and use can be maintained will depend upon the ability of the Park Service to promote, and the willingness of the visitor to accept, perception as the highest form of park use. Every visitor reacts to the beauty of the natural scene or the stirring drama of the historical past, if only passively. Salvation for the parks lies in the hope that the park visitor can be actively stimulated, by the immediacy of his surroundings and the substance of the interpretive programs, to perceive and treasure the natural and historical processes through which the land and all living things have achieved their form and by which they maintain their dependent existence."

William C. Everhart, *The National Park Service*, 1972

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If you see something that might be of interest to Coalition members, send it to Bill Halainen at the Weekly National Park System Report: BHalainen@gmail.com. Please don't submit them via his personal email address or Facebook page.

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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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