



The Coalition Weekly Report Wednesday, September 2, 2020

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Incidents

Big Thicket NP Park Recovering From Hurricane Laura

Hurricane Laura made landfall over southwestern Louisiana early last Thursday as a Category 4 hurricane, delivering storm surge, flash flooding, and hurricane-force winds to western Louisiana and eastern Texas. Big Thicket was in its direct path and continues recovery operations.

Although no park facilities and infrastructure were damaged, trees and branches remain down throughout the park. It reopened this past Sunday, albeit with limits:

- The park's visitor center and headquarters complex remain closed to the public.
- All ranger-led programs, academic field trips, volunteer workdays, and special events have been cancelled until further notice.
- Most vault toilets at trailheads and day use areas throughout the preserve will remain closed until further notice.

All hiking trails, river access points, boat launches and picnic areas are open. Additional details can be found at the following webpage.

Source: Jason Ginder, [Big Thicket NP](#).

Olympic NP Stolen Plane Crashes In Park

A small plane that was stolen in Jefferson County last Tuesday crashed near La Push, critically injuring the operator, who was pulled from the wreckage nearly 12 hours later by a Navy rescue team and flown to Harborview Medical Center.

Deputies said they received a report on Tuesday of a suspicious person trying to rent a plane at Jefferson County International Airport in order to fly to Astoria, Oregon. The man, identified as Richard Jordal, 59, couldn't show a pilot's license or insurance, though. He then went to a second plane rental business at the airport called Tailspin Tommy's. That company's co-owner, Nataliya Yeshyrina, spoke with Jordal for nearly an hour, but ultimately declined to authorize the rental due to the lack of proper documents.

Deputies say surveillance video shows Jordal later entering Tailspin Tommy's office, where deputies believe he stole the Cessna's keys. Investigators were notified of the missing plane on Tuesday evening. Yeshyrina said Jordal fueled up before taking off and described watching the plane's erratic flying on radar. The plane's GPS showed it was flying over the national park, but the transmissions quit about

20 miles north of Hoquiam. Investigators said that a person reported a possible plane crash near La Push around 10:30 p.m. When they arrived, they conducted a search but couldn't find the crash site in the heavily forested area.

On Wednesday morning, a helicopter crew with the U.S. Navy located the stolen plane and the injured pilot, who was unconscious. The pilot was taken to Harborview Medical Center and listed in critical condition Wednesday.

The investigation remains ongoing, with the FBI working with the National Park Service to determine if Jordal will face any federal charges.

Source: Michael Spears, [KIRO 7 News](#).

Grand Canyon NP Pilot Injured In Plane Crash At South Entrance

A small plane crashed in the park last Friday morning, causing a closure of State Route 64 near the park's south entrance.

The plane crashed onto the roadway in Tusayan and resulted in minor injuries. The Arizona Department of Public Safety said the pilot was the only person on board and injuries are believed to be non-life threatening. The crash scene blocked both north and southbound lanes of State Route 64.

According to the Federal Aviation Administration, the plane was a single-engine Cessna Caravan and it was making an emergency landing on the road north of Grand Canyon Airport around 10:40 a.m. The FAA says the plane had departed from Grand Canyon Airport and the pilot was planning to return there. The FAA is investigating. The Coconino County Sheriff's Office is also investigating.

When officers arrived on the scene, they found the plane upside down and located the pilot. Andrew Dutzy, 24, was treated by Tusayan Fire Department and flown to Flagstaff Medical Center for neck and back injuries.

Dutzy is an employee at the Paragon Skydiving company, which operates out of Grand Canyon Airport. On his way back to the airport, the engine of his aircraft died. He attempted to make an emergency landing but the right wing caught on a light pole, causing the crash.

Source: [KPNX News](#).

Mount Rushmore NP Man Caught Climbing George Washington's Head

A Michigan climber who was spotted earlier this month on Mount Rushmore and later slipped down a cliff has been fined \$1,500.

On August 19th, dispatchers received a report that a climber – Ayman Doppke – had been seen on Mt. Rushmore on the top of George Washington's head. He was reportedly creating a hazardous condition by climbing an unsafe slope. Doppke soon fell about 25 feet, then tumbled down a loose gravel slope.

Doppke was treated by a medic, but declined to be taken to a hospital. Rangers then arrested him.

Last week, Doppke pled guilty to illegally climbing the mountain.

Source: [Associated Press](#).

Sleeping Bear Dunes NL Two Visitors Save Life Of Five-Year-Old

Two men are being credited with saving the life of a five-year-old girl off of Peterson Beach.

The girl was tethered to an inflatable toy raft, but that tether came loose and the girl drifted out into Lake Michigan. Justin Perry and Jason Hadfield jumped into action. They were able to reach the girl and then get her onto a kayak and back to shore.

They were recognized last Tuesday morning by the sheriff's office and the National Park Service.

Source: Bill Froehlich, 9and10news.com.

Yellowstone NP Fuel Truck Tips Over, Releasing 3,000 Gallons Of Gas

The road between Mud Volcano and Fishing Bridge Junction remains temporarily closed due to an accident in which a tandem trailer on a truck hauling gasoline tipped over. The temporary road closure will allow park staff to assess the impacts of a gasoline spill. This segment of road closed last Thursday shortly after the incident occurred.

The commercial motor vehicle was transporting unleaded gasoline to facilities in the park when the tandem trailer flipped over on the west side of the road and approximately 3,000 gallons of unleaded fuel was released. There is no evidence that gasoline entered the Yellowstone River.

This incident remains under investigation. Mud Volcano is open and can be accessed from the north. The East Entrance Road to Fishing Bridge Junction is open. Visitors can also access Fishing Bridge Junction from the south.

Source: Sweetwater Now.

National Park System Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents

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

- *US Park Police* – A judge has rejected a request from Justice Department lawyers to delay a civil lawsuit filed by the parents of the northern Virginia man who was shot and killed by U.S. Park Police in 2017. The judge ruled that the civil trial will go forward as scheduled in November. Lawyers for the federal government, which is the defendant in the case, say they can't build a proper defense because the two officers who shot 25-year-old Bijan Ghaisar are invoking their Fifth Amendment rights and refusing to discuss their rationale for opening fire. Federal prosecutors declined to bring criminal charges against the two officers, but Fairfax County's commonwealth attorney is conducting a criminal probe. Source: WTOP News.
- *Acadia NP* – A federal judge has ruled that Bar Harbor police violated the Constitution by forcing the driver of a car in the deadliest incident in the history of Acadia National Park to submit to a blood test without securing a warrant. The judge approved a motion to suppress the results of a first blood alcohol test taken at Mount Desert Island Hospital about 90 minutes after the August 31, 2019, crash, which killed three people. McKee argued that because the crash took place on federally owned land, law enforcement should have obtained a warrant to take blood from Manubolu after he refused to submit to the test voluntarily. The judge ruled that Bar Harbor police had plenty of time to secure a warrant and rejected federal arguments that a warrantless blood draw was necessary because time was pressing. Source: Nick Sambides Jr., Bangor Daily News.

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center NIFC Remains At PL 5; Over 26,000 Firefighters Committed Nationwide

NIFC remains at Preparedness Level 5, the highest of five levels.

Ten new large fires were reported in seven states on Monday. Eighty-three large fires have burned nearly two million acres across the country. More than 26,000 wildland firefighters and support personnel are working toward containment goals on these incidents.

Park And Park-Related Fires

- *Point Reyes NS* – The 3,269-acre Woodward Fire has grown 782 acres since last week’s report in this newsletter. It’s 17% contained. A Type 1 IMT has been assigned; 585 firefighters and overhead have been committed. Active fire behavior has been reported, including uphill runs, isolated torching and flanking. The park remains closed. For further details, go to the InciWeb summary [at this link](#).
- *Rocky Mountain NP* – The park has closed a number of trails and campsites in its north end due to the proximity of the 23,000-acre Cameron Peak Fire. Included in this closure are Mummy Pass Trail, Comanche Peak Trail, Mirror Lake Trail, Poudre River Trail, Crater Trail, Colorado River Trail, Red Mountain Trail, Grand Ditch Access, Skeleton Gulch Trail, Thunder Pass Trail, and Little Yellowstone Trail. Closed cross country travel zones include Cascade Creek, Cache La Poudre, South Cache La Poudre, Hague Creek, and Mosquito Creek. Twenty wilderness campsites are also included in this closure area. For more information on the fire, go to the InciWeb summary [at this link](#).
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon NPs* – The newly-reported Moraine Fire has burned 110 acres in timber and brush. Active fire behavior is reported, with short-range spotting, isolated torching and smoldering. Trail closures are in effect.
- *Saguaro NP* – The Spud Rock Fire has burned 760 acres and is 50% contained. Minimal fire behavior is reported, with creeping and smoldering. Area and trail closures in effect.
- *Yellowstone NP* – As of this past Sunday, the Lone Star Fire had burned 960 acres in the Old Faithful area. Grand Loop Road and the day-use areas between Old Faithful and West Thumb Junction have reopened, but could close at any time with increased fire activity. Source: [KBZK News](#).

Resource Commitment Trend

Category	August 11	August 25	September 1
Area Command Teams	0	0	1
NIMO Teams	1	3	2
Type 1 Teams	6	17	19
Type 2 Teams	6	19	13
Crews	226	501	45
Engines	802	2,297	2,033
Helicopters	132	223	241
Total FF/Overhead	11,158	27,668	26,463

Fires/Acreage

Category	2010-2019 Ave	2020 Total	Difference
United States: YTD Fires	42,097	39,829	- 2,268
United States: YTD Acres	5,353,790	3,980,809	- 1,372,981

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

Nothing to report.

House Actions

August 24 – The Committee on Oversight and Reform held a hearing entitled “Protecting the Timely Delivery of Mail, Medicine, and Mail-in Ballots”. Testimony was heard from Louis DeJoy, Postmaster General, U.S. Postal Service; and Robert Duncan, Chairman, U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors.

August 28 – The Committee on Homeland Security held a hearing entitled “Protecting America's Democracy: Ensuring Every Vote Counts”. Testimony was heard from Jocelyn Benson, Secretary of State, Michigan; Michael Adams, Secretary of State, Kentucky; and public witnesses.

August 28 – The Committee on House Administration held a hearing entitled “Voting Safely in a Pandemic”. Testimony was heard from Alex Padilla, Secretary of State, California; Donald L. Palmer, Commissioner, U.S. Election Assistance Commission; Julie Wise, Director of Elections, King County, Washington; and public witnesses.

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.

- *NPS Under Fire For Role In GOP Convention* – “The National Park Service is in hot water with ethics watchdogs for a slickly produced video promoting President Trump along with its plans to host a fireworks spectacle after his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention,” reports *The Hill*. These two events “come on the heels of an [NPS video](#) praising the president for his involvement in legislation providing more funding to parks.” The article cites Donald Sherman, deputy director of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington: “Federal appropriations laws make it clear government dollars are meant to be used to serve the American public, not to help political office holders remain in power, and that appears to be what this video and what this event on the Mall is designed to do.” Delaney Marsco, an ethics expert with Campaign Legal Center, makes this point: “There’s a reason no other president has given a campaign speech in the Rose Garden. There is a reason no other president has given a campaign speech at the Lincoln Memorial. When we say no other president has done X, Y, or Z, there is a reason why. It’s because they know it’s wrong.” Source: Rebecca Beitsch, [The Hill](#).
- *Lawsuit Filed Regarding Illegal Appointment Of Acting Director Everson* – The administration’s latest maneuver to evade Senate confirmation for the National Park Service’s top official violates the law according to a [newly-amended federal suit](#) filed last week by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility and the Western Watersheds Project. The new complaint was

approved by a federal judge, who ordered the defendants to file their answer or a responsive motion by September 14th. The Trump administration is already facing similar legal challenges in other agencies, including, most notably, BLM, the Office of Surface Mining, and the Department of Homeland Security. Source: YubaNet.com.

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.

- *Crater Lake NP* – Hikers getting ready to hike down the only trail to Crater Lake are now being greeted by park staff who advise them what's allowed and what's not allowed at the lake. Two rangers are stationed at the beginning of the Cleetwood Cove Trail and a third patrols the trail and visits the lakeshore area. Their work is part of stepped up efforts to prevent the use of illegal materials, such as snorkels and even blow-up kayaks and other flotation devices, that could negatively impact the lake's water quality. Park staff have also been involved in an unusually high number of incidents involving people illegally climbing in the caldera rim, which is notoriously rocky and features steep, loose slopes. Source: Lee Juillerat, [Klamath Falls Herald and News](#).
- *Grand Teton NP* – “After eight boating mishaps on the Snake River required rescue operations by Grand Teton National Park staff in one month, staff members are reminding boaters to know their skill levels and put on a personal flotation device before getting out on the water,” reports *Cowboy State Daily*. “Not only have there been eight incidents requiring park assistance, but ‘several’ more that resulted in capsized or pinned vessels that were resolved with the assistance of partners or private boaters and without park personnel...” Source: Ellen Fike, [Cowboy State Daily](#).
- *Indiana Dunes NP* – The beach at the Portage Lakefront and Riverwalk will close for about three weeks while workers shore up the coastline. Work is starting on beach nourishment, where sand, either dredged or trucked in, is put back on the shoreline with heavy equipment to help repair damage from erosion. The lakefront and riverwalk, which opened in 2009, when Lake Michigan waters were lower and beaches were significantly larger, is 60-acre park owned by the National Park Service and managed by Portage. Gradually, large parts of the Portage beach have been erased. A large dune was breached by water last November. In recent years, a viewing platform collapsed into the lake and a handicapped-accessible ramp to the beach washed away because of the encroaching lake. The collapse is a symptom of a bigger issue. Lake Michigan has seen some of its highest water levels for several years, decimating beaches, while manmade structures to the east, like the Burns Waterway breakwall and the Port of Indiana to the east, have choked off much of the natural sand movement from the west coast of Michigan to beaches and area to the west, in Indiana. Source: Meredith Colias-Pete, [Gary Post-Tribune](#).
- *Wright Brothers NM* – The park is seeking public review and comment on the EA for a GMP amendment.. The amendment reviews existing strategies in the GMP (issued in 1997) and develops updated long-term strategies to improve the visitor experience, maintain the commemorative landscape and provide new administrative and visitor facilities. Comments are being taken at [the park's PEPC webpage](#) until September 24th. Source: National Park Service.
- *Zion NP* – On August 13th, *USA Today* ran a story on the deterioration of the park's shuttle buses: “The nearly 40 buses they have on hand have carried passengers since 2000, and haven't been replaced since, much to the dismay of visitors and park officials alike. Between the upkeep and many repairs, 79% of all park entrance fees go toward just keeping the shuttles running, totaling to about \$5 million a year. Though, new estimates suggest that number is nearing closer to 65%. These buses are not even manufactured anymore, forcing the rangers to cannibalize broken down buses for parts, or even buy them off of eBay...Zion is not ignorant of these problems. They've been desperately trying to secure federal funding to replace

the shuttles since 2017. But Zion has been repeatedly denied this urgent funding by the U.S. Department of Transportation, and Zion's partners don't know why." The article provides details on the requests for funding and the issues involved. Source: K. Sophie Will, [USA Today](#).

Opinions

Opinions, op-eds, letters and articles expressing specific opinions about issues pertaining to the national parks or national park system.

- "[Pence's Use Of Fort McHenry Threatens Park Service Employees](#)," *The Hill*. Opinion piece by Peter Jenkins, a senior counsel for the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility. Jenkins writes about the legal implications of the vice president's nomination acceptance speech, which was given at the site. "[Using] the Park Service for a blatantly political speech, such as accepting a nomination for a political role, presents a major hazard of violating the Hatch Act, which forbids any federal employee other than the president or vice president from engaging in political activity at their workplace during their hours of duty. Therefore, if any Park Service employee significantly aids or appears in the speech — such as being a background prop for Pence — they might be at risk of violating the federal law." Jenkins notes that this is a growing trend in the current administration, citing the president's use of the Lincoln Memorial for a news interview and Mount Rushmore on the Fourth of July for a presentation that sounded like a campaign speech. "We need to be vigilant against an administration that has figured out its way around laws and exploits iconic images from our National Parks, to potentially score more points with voters."

Briefly Noted

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

- *Stone Stacking* – On August 27th, the *Washington Post* ran a story on the chronic problem of visitors piling stones in parks. After noting that such rock cairns violate Leave No Trace principals, it lists reasons why people should "resist the urge to create a rock pile" – the rock stacks may be seen as trail markers and lead hikers astray, they're "disruptive" to the environment, they destroy cultural significance, and they intrude on other visitors' experience. The author offers alternatives to rock stacking, which, she says, should be reserved for back yards. Source: Sunny Fitzgerald, [Washington Post](#).
- *Best USA Beaches* – Tripadvisor has published a list of the top 25 beaches in the United States. A number of NPS beaches are usually included, but there are only two this year – Ruby Beach in Olympic NP (#18) and Race Point Beach in Cape Cod NS (#21). You can read the full list at the following site. Source: [Tripadvisor.com](#).

Climate and Conservation

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

National and Worldwide Issues

Reports on the national and international climate and conservation crisis.

- *Greenland Ice Sheet Melting Accelerates* – Greenland lost a record amount of ice in 2019, researchers reported last Thursday. Nearly half of it was lost in July, when the region roasted from an unusual heat wave. The net ice loss of more than 530 billion metric tons was more than twice the annual average since 2003. In July, when warm air from Europe moved north, leading to temperatures that were well above normal and causing widespread surface melting of the ice sheet, the loss was roughly equal to the average loss in a full year. Source: Henry Fountain, [New York Times](#).

- *Wildfires Have Increased Worldwide By 13% Since Last Year* – A new report from the World Wildlife Fund reveals that the number of fire alerts across the globe are up by 13% compared to last year. The report, available at this link, is entitled “[Fires, Forests and the Future: A Crisis Raging Out Of Control?](#)”. The 21-page report contains details on locations, causes and consequences. Its conclusion: “Persistent hotter and drier weather due to climate change, and other human factors such as land conversion for agriculture and poor forest management, are the main drivers behind the increase.” Source: [Our Daily Planet](#).
- *Increasingly Severe Snow Droughts Forecast For West* – Recent research published in [Geophysical Research Letters](#) has revealed that “back-to-back bad snow years are likely to become much more frequent in the not-too-distant future,” Alejandra Borunda reported in [National Geographic](#) this month. There is now approximately a 7% chance that typically snow-filled regions in the Western US will “get two really bad snow years in a row—years with snowpack lower than a quarter of the long-term average.” Seven percent may not sound like much, but in the next few decades, as Borunda noted, “those bookending ‘snow droughts’ could occur 40% of the time.” This rise would be devastating for these regions; as Laurie Huning, a postdoctoral scholar at the University of California Irvine, told [Phys.org](#), “Snow is an important global water resource that plays a vital role in natural processes, agriculture, hydropower and basic socioeconomic conditions of various regions.” These snow droughts could wreak havoc across the West which relies on snow to keep soils resistant against fires, maintain ecosystems rich in biodiversity, and provide water for millions of people (a threat already apparent in the alarming water loss across the Colorado River which is fed by Rocky Mountain snow). Source: [Our Daily Planet](#).

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 and Invasives

- *Grand Teton NP* – Efforts to remove nonnative mountain goats from the park will resume this fall, and the park is seeking volunteers to help with the culling. Last winter, aerial marksmen brought in by the park killed three dozen mountain goats before Secretary Bernhardt, responding to concerns from Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon, ordered a halt to the work. The problem from the governor's viewpoint was that the park wasn't using any ground-based volunteers in the culling. Now the park is seeking applications for qualified volunteers to help cull the nonnative mountain goats -- there are about 100 estimated in the park -- as part of Grand Teton's management plan aimed to conserve a native and vulnerable population of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep in the Teton Range. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#).
- *Olympic NP* – On August 7th, the team charged with relocating the park's mountain goats reached its goal of moving about 50% of the Olympics' mountain goats — a win-win for the Olympics and the North Cascades, two ecosystems suffering from a respective excess and lack of mountain goats. The goats aren't native to the Olympics, but they've flourished there since hunters introduced them in the 1920s, before the formation of the park, to the detriment of native species. Through decades of damaging endemic plants, they've also become increasingly aggressive toward humans. The North Cascades — which used to have more mountain goats — have salt deposits craved by the goats and more space to house them away from humans. Source: Hannah Weinberger, [Crosscut](#).
- *Upper Delaware NS&RR* – The park has issued an alert concerning the northern snakehead, which has been found in the waters of the Delaware River. The fish is an invasive species; it is such an effective hunter that it can threaten the populations of local species. The fish, which

has the nickname “Frankenfish,” can also survive out of water and occasionally will move overland, spreading to different bodies of water. Northern snakeheads, which are native to Asia, were originally introduced in the United States as a source of food, but the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service banned their import in 2002 because they were too successful in the wild. Fishermen who see or catch the fish are urged to notify the park and to refrain from throwing it back into the river. Source: [Washington Post](#).

External/Internal Development

- *Gates of the Arctic NP* – Nine groups have jointly sued the administration to challenge its approval of a commercial gravel road that would “destroy, degrade and pollute Arctic land and water, and disrupt and harm the health of wildlife and people across a broad region in the southern Brooks Range.” The project applicant — the Alaska Industrial and Development Export Authority, (AIDEA) a public corporation of the State of Alaska — would use public funding to subsidize the 211-mile Ambler road, which would be used solely by private mining interests. The industrial gravel road would cut through Gates of the Arctic National Preserve and pose numerous threats to the people, water, and wildlife of Northwest Alaska. It would slice through one of the longest wildlife migration paths in the world, cross nearly 3,000 rivers and streams, dam tundra wetlands, and interrupt traditional Alaska Native ways of life. The suit, which was filed in U.S. District Court in Alaska, says the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service and Army Corps of Engineers failed to comply with the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, NEPA, the Clean Water Act and other federal laws and regulations by making final decisions based on a deeply flawed and inadequate environmental review. Source: [National Parks Conservation Association](#).
- *Chaco Culture NHP* – Over the past two decades, BLM has allowed oil and gas companies to drill hundreds of wells within 15 miles of the park using the technique known as hydraulic fracturing, or fracking. Fracking typically creates air and noise pollution, threatens water supplies, increases truck traffic on local roads, and harms communities with toxic chemicals. To illustrate the extent of drilling in recent years, an organization called SkyTruth created an animation of wells surrounding park by illustrating data from New Mexico’s Oil Conservation Division as well as using the most current imagery from the Department of Agriculture’s National Agriculture Imagery Program (NAIP) as a backdrop. The visualization shows the growth of wells throughout the region surrounding the park, with distances from the park boundary delineated. New wells have emerged throughout the region in this time period, from the park boundary to 15 miles and beyond. The region within 15 miles of the park now contains 33% more oil and gas wells than it did in 2000 — an increase of 367 wells. Click on the following link to see these maps. Source: [SkyTruth](#).
- *Big Cypress NP* – A Mississippi-based oil company has dropped plans to drill for oil just outside the park, a move heralded by the South Florida Wildlands Association, which had challenged the drilling permit. Tocala, LLC, cited no reason for abandoning the lease when it asked the state to withdraw the permit and release the bond the company had posted. The permit was for an area involving a mix of private and state lands, including Dinner Island Ranch Wildlife Management Area, adjacent to the northern boundary of the preserve. Endangered Florida panthers that make Big Cypress home use this area as well. Source: Kurt Repanshek, [National Parks Traveler](#).

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.

- *Acting Director Everson’s Comments On NPS Employees* – The Coalition [issued a statement](#) following Acting Director Margaret Everson’s comments that a lack of park employees due to the pandemic should not be a reason to limit access to parks. Coalition Chair Phil Francis said: “This directive from Acting Director Everson demonstrates her complete lack of understanding

regarding how parks operate and what National Park Service employees actually do. Her comment should disqualify her from serving as the acting director, as it demonstrates her lack of experience and support for NPS staff and the protection of park resources.”

- *Vice President's Speech At Fort McHenry* – CPANP took several actions this week related to the Vice President's campaign speech at Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine on Wednesday. We [sent a letter](#) to Acting Director Everson, expressing our concerns over the use of the site and [issued a press release](#) detailing not only concerns about appropriate use but reports of resource damage. Coalition Executive Council member Rebecca Harriett [spoke with several media outlets](#) about the damage to the site; Coalition chair Phil Francis [spoke with The Hill](#) about the continuing concerns over the GOP's use of national parks as campaign props.
- *Great American Outdoors Act* – Phil also [spoke with another reporter from The Hill](#) about the recently passed Great American Outdoors Act and his hopes for transparency and fairness in how the funds are administered: “I hope that the determination of which projects get funded is based upon need and not politics.”
- *BLM Oil And Gas Lease Sale* – The Coalition [joined a protest](#) over the BLM's upcoming oil and gas lease sale in September in Utah. The protest was organized by the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance and also includes numerous other groups, such as the Sierra Club and NPCA.
- *Lawsuit On Changes In Alaska Hunting Regs* – The Coalition [joined with partners in a lawsuit](#) filed in federal district court in Alaska that charges the Interior Department and National Park Service with violating multiple laws when adopting a rule that would open up national preserves in Alaska to hunting practices like baiting brown bears and killing wolves during the denning season.

Source: Emily Thompson, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator.

Park People

NPS Alumni Passing of Phil Ward

Phil Ward, a career ranger and former regional chief ranger for Western Region, died while in hospice care in Tucson on August 28th. No more information is yet available, but will appear in this newsletter when received.

Condolences to his wife Jo and daughter Amy can be sent to Jo at 8877 S. Anvil Ranch Place, Vail, AZ 85461.

Source: Dwayne Collier.

NPS Alumni Passing of John Guthrie

John Guthrie, 79, a 35-year employee of the National Park Service, passed away on March 14th at his home.

John retired at age 53 to spend the rest of his time with his family and friends.

John was an avid student of life who spent his lifetime always reading, researching and exploring.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that contributions in John's name be made to No Kill Animal Shelters or St. Jude's or Shriner's Hospitals.

Source: Currentobituary.com.

National Park Service Recent NPS Management Changes

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

- *Washington Office* – Justin Unger has been selected as the new associate director for business services. As AD for business services, Justin will oversee the recreation fee program, acquisitions and financial assistance, and commercial services. Justin is coming to WASO from Everglades and Dry Tortugas National Parks, where he has served as deputy superintendent since 2014. He was chief of administration for the National Mall and Memorial Parks from 2009 to 2014 and previously served as a program analyst in the WASO Office of Strategic Planning. He will start his new position in mid-October. Source: Deputy Director, Management and Administration Lena McDowall.
- *Washington Office* – Shawn Bengel became the Service's permanent deputy director for operations on August 30th. Bengel, who has served as the acting deputy director for operations since October 2019, is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the NPS. Before his current assignment, Shawn served as the associate director for the Park Planning, Facilities, and Lands Directorate. In his role overseeing PPFL, he provided leadership, policy development, program accountability, and budget formulation in the functional areas of park planning and development; special resource studies; land acquisition and related real estate operations; facility and infrastructure design, construction, and maintenance. Source: [National Park Service](#).
- *Klondike Gold Rush NHP* – Angela Wetz will be serving as the park's acting superintendent. Formerly the superintendent of Fossil Butte, Wetz replaces Jason Taylor, who was appointed director of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute, Rocky Mountain Research Station in Missoula, Montana. Taylor served as superintendent of the park for one year. Wetz's assignment will last up to a year. Source: Melinda Munson, [Skagway News](#).

From The Archives

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

- *Mesa Verde NP* – The manager of Far View Terrace called the park's emergency number just after 4 a.m. on August 15th to report that she was working in the office of the gift shop and that someone was breaking into the building. Rangers Zack Rogers and Jeremy Cords arrived shortly thereafter, and Rogers soon came upon a person - subsequently identified as 29-year-old Margarete Tsosie - behind the building. When Rogers ordered Tsosie to stop, she threw down the rug she was carrying and ran off. Rogers pursued and eventually tackled her. Eight Navajo rugs were found hidden in a bush and another six were stacked next to the door through which she'd entered the building. Four more remain missing. Total valuation of the rugs has been placed at over \$16,000. Felony second degree burglary and theft charges have been filed against her; other charges are pending. Tsosie is to be arraigned on September 14th. She is presently out on a \$10,000 unsecured bond. Other rangers who assisted in the investigation were Philip Arnold, Melissa Cobern, Ben Wardlow, and Jim O'Sickey, the chief investigator. Submitted by Dispatcher Denise Fuller.
- *Rocky Mountain NP* – A couple from Lincoln, Nebraska, was pulled to safety from Roaring River above the 75-foot-high Horseshoe Falls on August 12th. The wife had slipped into the water and immediately became wedged between some boulders. The husband and other visitors made a couple of rescue attempts, which concluded with the husband entering the water and

becoming stranded in mid-stream. Water rescue teams members and volunteers responded immediately, but the couple was nonetheless in the icy water for about 40 minutes before rescuers arrived on scene. Longs Peak ranger Jim Detterline entered the water in a wetsuit and was able to grab them just as they were about to lose their grip; all three were then pulled ashore. The man and woman were both suffering from hypothermia. They received warm fluids intravenously, then were airlifted to a Denver hospital by two helicopters. Rangers cared for the couple's three children and drove them to the hospital to be reunited with their parents when they were released later that evening. Submitted by Kris Holien.

- *Mojave NP* – On August 17th, a team comprised of park and BLM rangers and investigators and state game wardens witnessed Louis and Gabriel Lefave and a juvenile, all from Las Vegas, dumping hazardous and toxic materials onto BLM land located in California and adjacent to the park. The three men were subsequently arrested and charged with single felony counts of illegally dumping hazardous wastes. Their arrests marked the culmination of a month-and-a-half long investigation into a series of hazmat dumping cases in the park and on surrounding BLM and private lands. At least one of the dump sites is within a park wilderness area. A dozen sites have so far been found; together, they contain a total of 108 55-gallon drums of toxic and hazardous materials, some of which have spilled their contents onto and into surrounding soil. Information gleaned in the arrests suggests that there may be 30 more drums at another four to six sites. The Service and BLM have so far expended about \$170,000 on clean-up of these sites and on the associated criminal investigation. The NPS share has come through the support of the hazmat coordinator in Pacific West Field Office. Following the arrests, park, BLM and EPA rangers and investigators served search warrants on a Las Vegas firm and the residence of the firm's owner. More evidence was obtained in the searches. Additional charges and arrests are pending. Both the site clean-up and the investigations are being managed under the incident command system. Agencies involved include the NPS, BLM, FBI, EPA, California Fish and Game, the Nevada Highway Patrol, and the San Bernadino health department. Submitted by Incident Commander Bill Blake.

A Closing Observation

"The ultimate purposes for which parks are managed have spiritual overtones. To some degree, each of the bountiful elements of the parks - plant or tree or bird, historic building or artifact, seashell or pot shard - helps a person to find his place in the universe. The function of a national park might be considered as contributing insight into those sovereign questions that human knowledge derived from practical experience finds so difficult to answer: Who are we, where are we, and why?"

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

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- Production: Steve Pittleman
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- Issue Contributors: Bob Martin, Steve Hastings, Dwayne Collier

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.

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