



## The Coalition Weekly Report Wednesday, December 23, 2020

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### Editor's Note

Due to the holiday season, this will be the last issue of the newsletter until Wednesday, January 13th.

### Incidents

#### **Hawaii Volcanoes NP Kilauea Roars Back To Life**

Kilauea volcano on Hawaii's Big Island erupted again on Sunday night, with lava shooting into air, boiling away a water lake and sending a massive plume of steam, gas and ash soaring into the atmosphere.

In the first hours of the eruption, lava mixed rapidly with water in the summit's crater lake to create steam. The sky above the eruption turned shades of orange and red as people lined up to watch the billowing column of gas and vapor rise above the volcano in the middle of the night. All the water evaporated out of the lake and a steam cloud shot up about 30,000 feet into the atmosphere.

The eruption began late Sunday within the volcano's caldera. Because of the location of the erupting lava, no homes were evacuated and there was little risk to the public. The crater, named Halemaumau, is located within the park and was home to a longstanding lava lake that was present for years before a 2018 eruption caused it to drain.

Cars are lining up at the park entrance to get a glimpse of the lava and there's a long wait to get out to Kilauea overlook, where parking is scarce.

A magnitude 4.4 earthquake hit about an hour after the volcano began erupting. The USGS said it received more than 500 reports of people who felt the earthquake but significant damage to buildings or structures was not reported.

[Full story](#). Source: Caleb Jones, Associated Press.

#### **Grand Canyon NP Man Days In Fall From South Kaibab Trail**

A Phoenix man died after falling about 80 feet while day hiking on the South Kaibab Trail last Tuesday.

Park rangers responded after getting a call shortly after 7:30 a.m. Tuesday that a person had died above the Black Bridge on the South Kaibab Trail.

Rangers found the victim, who was identified as 23-year-old Jaiquan Carter. He is believed to have been hiking when he fell from the trail.

An investigation is under way by the National Park Service and the Coconino County Medical Examiner's Office.

[Full story](#). Source: Mike Cruz, *Arizona Republic*.

## **National Fire Situation**

### **National Interagency Fire Center Fire Activity Remains Light Nationwide**

The national preparedness level has dropped to PL 1.

Three large fires are active in California; together, they have burned 307,279 acres. To date, 56,914 wildfires have burned 10,250,447 acres nationwide – exceeding the ten-year average by more than 3 million acres.

### **Resource Commitment Trend**

<b>Category</b>	<b>December 4</b>	<b>December 11</b>	<b>December 18</b>
Area Command Teams	0	0	0
NIMO Teams	0	0	0
Type 1 Teams	1	0	0
Type 2 Teams	0	0	0
Crews	9	11	8
Engines	167	32	21
Helicopters	13	2	5
Total FF/Overhead	1,165	539	280

### **Fires/Acreage**

<b>Category</b>	<b>2010-2019 Ave</b>	<b>2020 Total</b>	<b>Difference</b>
United States: YTD Fires	58,592	56,914	- 1,678
United States: YTD Acres	6,693,143	10,250,447	+ 3,557,304

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**

**December 11** – The president signed into law [H.R. 8900](#), making further continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2021 (Public Law 116–215).

**December 17** – The president signed into law [H.R. 473](#), to authorize the Every Word We Utter Monument, a non-profit organization, to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia

in commemoration of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which gave women the right to vote (Public Law 116–217).

## **Senate Actions**

**December 16** – The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: Committee held a hearing to examine irregularities in the 2020 election, after receiving testimony from Donald Palmer, Commissioner, Election Assistance Commission; Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Representative Frank Ryan, Lebanon; Chris Krebs, former Director of the Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, Washington, D.C.; and public witnesses. There were no witnesses from federal agencies at the hearing.

**December 16** – The Senate passed the following bills:

- [S. 2165](#), to enhance protections of Native American tangible cultural heritage.
- [H.R. 1923](#), with an amendment, to require the Department of the Treasury to mint and issue quarter-dollar coins in commemoration of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment granting women the right to vote. The design on the reverse of each coin shall be emblematic of the accomplishments and contributions of a prominent woman who was a resident of a state, the District of Columbia, or a U.S. territory. The bill now returns to the House for further action.

**December 18** – The Senate passed the following bills:

- [H.J. Res. 107](#), making further continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2021. The bill extends funding for all federal agencies through December 20, 2020. The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law.
- [S. 4222](#), to require Federal agencies to submit to the Comptroller General of the United States a report on rules that are revoked, suspended, replaced, amended, or otherwise made ineffective.

**December 19** – The Senate passed the following bills:

- [H.R. 5459](#), to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to correct a land ownership error within the boundary of Rocky Mountain National Park. The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law.
- [S. 3989](#), to amend the United States Semiquincentennial Commission Act of 2016 to modify certain membership and other requirements of the United States Semiquincentennial Commission, with the amendment of the House. The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law.

## **House Actions**

**December 16** – The House observed a moment of silence in remembrance of the over 300,000 Americans who have passed away a result of the COVID–19 virus.

**December 17** – The House passed the following bills:

- [S. 3989](#), to amend the United States Semiquincentennial Commission Act of 2016 to modify certain membership and other requirements of the United States Semiquincentennial Commission, with an amendment. The bill now goes back to the Senate for further action.
- [H.R. 3250](#), to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of the sites associated with the life and legacy of the noted American philanthropist and business executive Julius Rosenwald, with a special focus on the Rosenwald Schools, by a vote of 387 yeas to 5 nays.

- [H.R. 7460](#), to extend the authority for the establishment by the Peace Corps Commemorative Foundation of a commemorative work to commemorate the mission of the Peace Corps and the ideals on which the Peace Corps was founded.
- [H.R. 5472](#), to redesignate the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site as the "Jimmy Carter National Historical Park".
- [H.R. 5852](#), to redesignate the Weir Farm National Historic Site in the State of Connecticut as the "Weir Farm National Historical Park".

**December 18** – The House passed [H.J. Res. 107](#), making further continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2021, by a vote of 320 yeas to 60 nays. The bill extends funding for all federal agencies through December 20, 2020.

## 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.

- *Rep. Deb Haaland To Be Nominated As DOI Secretary* – President-elect Joe Biden will nominate Rep. Deb Haaland to be Secretary of the Interior. If confirmed, she will be the first Native American to serve in that position. Haaland, 59, D-N.M., is an enrolled citizen of the Pueblo of Laguna Native American tribe and serves on the House Natural Resources Committee. She was one of the first two Native American women elected to the United States Congress, the other being Rep. Sharice Davids, D-Kan. [Full story](#). Source: Rebecca Morin and Ledyard King, *USA Today*.

### 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.

- *Grand Teton NP* – Chronic wasting disease (CWD) has been confirmed in an elk in Grand Teton National Park. The cow elk was harvested by a hunter participating in the park's elk reduction program. Tissue samples were collected as part of the park's mandatory testing program. It is the first elk to test positive for CWD in northwest Wyoming and in close proximity to the National Elk Refuge and other elk feeding grounds. Wildlife managers say that while the positive test in an elk raises concern, the positive test result does not come as a surprise based on the steady progression of the disease westward across the state and the positive result for a mule deer in Grand Teton National Park in the fall of 2018. [Full story](#). Source: KIDK News.
- *Katahdin Woods and Waters NM* – The NPS has received \$380,000 in federal funding to buy two tracts of land in a potential expansion of the park. Negotiations will soon start with land owners who had previously signaled a willingness to sell to the federal government. If acquired, the tracts of land would add an estimated 3,000 acres to the 87,500-acre national monument. The expansion would connect parts of the monument that are now separated and would add snowmobile trails that could be used by wintertime visitors. [Full story](#). Source: *Bangor Daily News*.
- *New River Gorge NP* – New River Gorge is now a national park. The new designation is contained in the FY 21 funding legislation that just passed. The renaming is projected to raise visitorship to the area by approximately 20 percent over an estimated 1.8 million annually tourists now. [Full story](#). Source: David Sibray, *West Virginia Explorer*.
- *Sleeping Bear Dunes NL* – Human remains discovered in the park back in 2017 have been determined to be "most likely prehistoric in age." The remains were found by a visitor and later handed over to a lab for testing, but the news only became public this week when the findings

were released. In a public notice, authorities say the remains “show characteristics of Native American populations” and were found on “lands that are recognized as the aboriginal land of The Tribes.” Park officials are said to be consulting several regional tribal communities on what should be done with the remains. [Full story](#). Source: *The Daily Beast*.

## The Federal Government

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

- *2021 Budget Details Revealed* – “After weeks of negotiations and multiple short-term continuing resolutions,” reports *Government Executive*, “lawmakers on Monday approved a \$1.4 trillion omnibus appropriations package to fund agencies through the end of fiscal 2021, although the measure would allow for only a 1% across-the-board pay raise for federal employees and fails to block implementation of President Trump’s controversial plan to politicize the civil service. The bill, which was finalized and released Monday afternoon, is silent on federal employee compensation for next year, which effectively endorses the alternative pay plan that President Trump submitted in February. That plan provides civilian federal workers with a 1% across-the-board pay increase next year and no change to locality pay rates, a figure that falls far short of the 3% pay raise that military service members are slated to receive in 2021...The bill also makes no mention of Schedule F, the controversial plan unveiled by Trump in October that would strip the civil service protections of potentially hundreds of thousands of career federal workers, making them effectively at-will employees. Experts warn that even partial implementation of Trump’s executive order establishing Schedule F could have broad ramifications and will be difficult for the Biden administration to roll back.” [Full story](#). Source: Erich Wagner, *Government Executive*.
- *Data Released On DOI Covid 19 Cases* – Newly revealed internal data shows that more than 2,000 Interior Department employees have been stricken with COVID-19, with the highest numbers coming from the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the relatively low-profile Bureau of Indian Affairs and Bureau of Indian Education. All told, Interior’s latest weekly “State of the States” reviewed by *E&E News* indicates that 2,130 “confirmed cases” have been counted among Interior workers, and 17 Interior employees have died from the relentlessly contagious disease. At the National Park Service, 522 employees have tested positive, followed by 372 BLM staffers and 348 BIA employees, according to the Wednesday internal department report. [Full story](#). Source: Michael Doyle and Rob Hotakainen, *E&E News*.

## 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.

- *Air Quality Decision* – The Coalition [submitted comments](#) in support of the Air Quality Control Commission’s recent decision to reduce air pollution by accelerating the retirement dates of coal-fired power plants in Colorado through the regional haze rulemaking. Nine polluting coal plants would retire by 2028 — sharply reducing the pollution that causes haze in Rocky Mountain National Park among others. The comments were issued in light of pressure by industry lobbyists to reverse this decision:
- *Air Quality Decision, Continued* – Unfortunately, despite the above, the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission voted to reverse its decision to accelerate the retirements of three Colorado coal units. We [issued a statement](#) about our disappointment in this decision.
- *New Federal Oil And Gas Leases And Permits* – CPANP joined over 500 organizations in [sending a letter](#) to the Biden-Harris transition team, urging them to issue an executive order to enact a

“day one” commitment, with no state exceptions, to ban new federal oil and gas leasing and permitting on public lands and waters:

- *Support For Secretary-Designate Haaland* – President-elect Joe Biden has selected Representative Deb Haaland to serve as his Secretary of the Interior. She would be the first Indigenous person to serve in that position. We [issued a statement of support](#) for her nomination:

Source: Emily Thompson, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator.

## **Park People**

### **Passages**

A listing of the deaths of retired and active NPS employees over the past few months:

- *Fred Dayhoff* passed away last Wednesday at his and Sandy's cottage in East Village, Cutler Bay, Florida. He had been in hospice care for several months and finally succumbed to the cancer he so valiantly endured. As throughout most of Fred's life, Sandy was with him and is now carrying out his final wishes. Fred will be cremated and his ashes will be returned to their long-time Loop Road home in the 'Glades. Per Fred's wishes, there will be no obituary and no funeral service. He also requested that no flowers or sympathy cards be sent. He did suggest that donations to the hospice team who cared for him in his last months would be accepted: Catholic Hospice, Inc. (Attn: Bronze Team), 14875 NW 77 Avenue, Suite 100, Miami Lakes, FL 33014.

### **Recognition**

A listing of awards and other forms of recognition received by past and present NPS employees.

- *Bill Spruill* has been recognized in a publication called *Because Of Them We Can* for being the first Black helicopter operator for the US Park Police. Spruill, a Rich Square, North Carolina native, grew up on a farm, eventually leaving after high school to pursue his career, obtaining his private pilot's license along the way. When the U.S. Park Police founded their aviation program, Spruill was one of just three officers trained as helicopter pilots, making history as the first and only Black person to serve in the position from 1972 to 1977. Spruill retired as a ranking major and became the first national aviation manager for the National Park Service, a position he held for 15 years before retiring in 2006. [Full story](#). Source: *Because Of Them We Can*.
- *Galen Howell*, fixed-wing pilot at Grand Canyon National Park, has been selected as the 2020 National Park Service Aviator of the Year. This award recognizes an individual who has performed missions of significant consequence and valor or has actively promoted the advancement or recognition of an NPS aviation program, mission or service. This award is given to one individual each year. [Full story](#). Source: KOLD News.
- *Director's Awards for Natural and Cultural Resources* – Each year, the National Park Service recognizes exemplary work in both natural and cultural resource stewardship and management through awards that recognize employees who go above and beyond day-to-day duties to solve problems or create new opportunities or projects with creative thinking and action. The Natural Resource Awards Program recognizes the outstanding contributions of individuals in understanding, protecting, and managing park natural resources. A virtual ceremony to recognize the 2018 and 2019 recipients was held in early December. About 50 awards were conferred, so it's not possible to list them all in these pages. Instead, [see the full story](#). Source: National Park Service.

- *George McDonald* has received the Robert Stanton Award for 2020 for sustained and innovative achievement in promoting racial or ethnic diversity in the management of North America's natural, historic and cultural heritage. Throughout his career with the NPS, McDonald has played a key role in several projects designed to enhance and increase the number of underserved, minority and disadvantaged youth participating in park activities and engaging in employment and educational opportunities in parks. He developed a service-wide funding source for the Youth Partnerships Program in collaboration with the NPS's budget office in 2007, in order to support youth development programming focused on education, recreation, volunteer service and employment, and that engages diverse audiences. [See the full story for details on his other contributions](#). Source: Clemson University.

## **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.

- *Lassen Volcanic NP* – Winds of up to 100 mph struck the park during last week's storm, blowing down numerous trees across power lines. Over ten inches of rain fell at headquarters. Headquarters and Manzanita Lake lost power early on December 12th; Manzanita Lake is still without power. A tree fell across the Loomis Museum, but the roof remained intact, which has kept water and snow from entering the building. An entrance fee office sustained damage from a falling tree, but is also dry. The employee quarters and generator building at Drakesbed guest ranch were also damaged. At the time of the report, personnel had not yet had the chance to check ranger stations at Juniper Lake, Butte Lake, Twin Lakes and Horseshoe Lake. Damage estimates are underway. The park road is closed at both entrances. Submitted by Chief Ranger Bryan Swift.
- *Grand Canyon NP* – The park - along with the rest of the Service - is in the process of a Phase I closure, as directed. Most areas of the park are accessible, but the link between the NPS and the visiting public is impaired due to the closure of visitor contact stations and other non-emergency government services, including the suspension of interpretive programs and fee collection operations. The Department of Interior and State of Arizona are continuing negotiations on a possible donation agreement that would allow the Secretary of Interior to implement a less restrictive closure, should a full closure be ordered. The negotiations are focusing on the area between Mather Point and Hermits Rest on the South Rim, the most visited area of the park. All visitor facilities within this area would remain open, although it's likely that some non-emergency government services would still be curtailed. All other park areas would be closed, including canyon overlooks along East Rim Drive, Desert View, trails below the rim, the Colorado River, and outlying areas. The effects the agreement may have on the closure process will remain uncertain until the agreement is signed. Submitted by Mallory Smith.
- *Andersonville NHP* – Some time during the night of December 10th, at least two people entered the park and excavated 38 holes in the stockade area and Star Fort an effort to find and retrieve artifacts. Metal detectors and at least one shovel were apparently employed. Most of the holes were between four and eight inches deep and eight to twelve inches wide; four were over a foot deep. The incident is under investigation. Submitted by Ranger Alan Marsch.

## **A Closing Observation**

"While we're trying to preserve in our natural parks a record of biological and human history, we're also trying to preserve something a little harder to understand: A foundation for the rediscovery of North America, the perpetuation of the idea that a resource does not have to be used in order to be valuable, and that the land has a dignity and a power all its own. It does not require anything from us. Parks preserve the idea that something does not have to have a purpose to have life."

[Author and naturalist Barry Lopez](#)

## **Acknowledgements**

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- Production: Steve Pittleman
- Regular Correspondents: Don Hellmann, Emily Thompson, Dennis Burnett, Rick Smith, Duncan Morrow and Mark Forbes
- Issue Contributors: Maureen Finnerty, Bill Walters, John Townsend

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

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The *Weekly National Park System Report* is a publication of The Coalition To Protect America's National Parks. It is prepared by Coalition member Bill Halainen, former editor of the *NPS Morning Report*, and produced and disseminated by Coalition member Steve Pittleman.

The Coalition is a non-profit organization of past and current NPS employees and their allies that "studies, educates, speaks, and acts for the preservation and protection of the National Park System and mission-related programs of the National Park Service."

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