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## **The Coalition Report**

### **Wednesday, April 20, 2022**

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#### **Coalition Actions**

The Coalition published [a report](#) urging the Biden administration to use the Antiquities Act to help meet the goals of the "30 by 30" initiative (to conserve 30% of U.S. lands and waters by 2030) and highlights several national parks that got their start as national monuments. The report was featured in [HuffPost](#) on April 19.

Coalition Executive Committee member Don Hellmann [spoke with](#) *National Parks Traveler* about the differences in funding between smaller historic and/or cultural national parks, as compared to larger parks with higher visitation.

The Coalition issued a short [statement](#) of support for Representative Veronica Escobar's (D-TX) letter urging President Joe Biden to use the Antiquities Act to establish the Caster Range National Monument.

#### **National/Regional NPS Updates**

*A summary of news pertaining to management and oversight of the NPS, to current trends and issues affecting the National Park System and its programs, or intersecting with the parks on a more regional basis.*

- *White House proclamation on National Park Week* - On April 15, President Joe Biden signed a proclamation establishing National Park Week (April 16-24, 2022), which also touched on the 150th anniversary of the national parks, as well as the administration's agenda for improving the system. Source: [The White House](#)
- *Call to reinstate vehicle escorts for veterans* - The Department of the Interior

recently announced that they would end the practice of providing vehicular escorts by the U.S. Park Police for the Honor Flight Network, a program that provides all-expenses-paid visits for veterans to Washington, D.C. On April 11, 76 members of Congress signed onto a letter asking the DOI to reinstate the practice. Source: [ABC 20](#)

- *DOI releases Equity Action Plan* - On April 14, the Department of the Interior published its first Equity Action Plan, outlining its efforts to advance equity throughout its operations. Its priorities are contracts for businesses from underserved communities, discretionary grants to Tribes for sustainable development and quality of life, and addressing barriers to recreation on DOI lands and waters. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *NPS awards \$1 million for underrepresented community history* - On April 11, the National Park Service awarded \$1 million in Underrepresented Community Grants to 22 projects in 16 states, the District of Columbia, and Guam. The program allows underserved communities to identify, plan and develop nominations to the National Register of Historic Places so that a more diverse American story is told. It is supported by the Historic Preservation Fund, which uses revenue from federal oil leases to assist with broad preservation projects. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *\$2.3 million in battlefield grants* - On April 8, the National Park Service announced \$2,347,080 in Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants to three entities in New Jersey, Mississippi, and Virginia, protecting nearly 500 acres of American Revolutionary War and Civil War battlefields. The funding comes from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *NPS signs MOU with Republic of Palau* - On April 12, the National Park Service and the Republic of Palau signed a Memorandum of Understanding to partner in sustainable visitor use and tourism planning. Palau is planning a protected area network of marine and terrestrial units. The NPS will support planning and help create decision-making frameworks for tourism and sustainable visitor use. Palau will support the NPS with its expertise in climate change and marine protection to better support island and marine sites in the National Park System. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *State of Michigan and NPS to partner in accessibility* - The State of Michigan will partner with the State of Michigan's Outdoor Recreation Industry Office, Department of Transportation, Department of Labor and Economic Development, and Office of Future Mobility and Electrification to pilot technological solutions to increase sustainability, accessibility, and equity in five national park units in the state. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Aramark buys Forever Resorts* - Aramark has signed an agreement to acquire the

concessions for destination properties managed by Forever Resorts, which consists of 12 outdoor adventure locations in or adjacent to national park units and national forests, including the Grand Canyon Lodge at the North Rim, the Lodge at Bryce Canyon, Signal Mountain Lodge and Marina at Grand Teton, Chisos Mountain Lodge at Big Bend, Cedar Pass Lodge in Badlands, and Rock Harbor Lodge at Isle Royale. Forever Resorts was founded in 1981 and has been one of the largest NPS concessioners. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)

- *Historians publish short histories of women's contributions to NPS* - Historians from the University of California, Davis, have published 69 short biographies of important women in National Park Service history, an article about women and power in the American West and Pacific, and a set of three story maps that provide a timeline of women's roles through park history. The project was funded with a \$32,000 grant from the NPS and the material is available publicly. Source: [UC Davis](#)
- *NPS program aimed at diversity* - *The Sheridan Press* published [an article](#) about the National Park Service Academy, a program aimed at introducing diverse students and young professionals to NPS careers via job shadowing and internships. Source: *The Sheridan Press*
- *Most kid-friendly national parks* - According to a study of the 63 National Parks (in name) by The Family Vacation Guide, Yellowstone is considered the most kid-friendly park, as rated by hotels, trails, attractions, and landmarks suitable for children. Great Smoky Mountains, Rocky Mountain, Yosemite, and Grand Canyon rounded out the top five. Source: [Travel + Leisure](#), [The Family Vacation Guide](#)

### **Around the Parks**

*Park reports are in alphabetical order.*

- *Acadia National Park* - The park's trail system was added to the National Register of Historic Places. It is the largest system of trails listed in the Register. The NPS and Friends of Acadia worked together on the nomination for several years. Source: [Acadia National Park](#)
- *Big Cypress National Preserve* - Florida International University News published [an article](#) about conservation ecologist and professor Hong Liu's study of the rare cigar orchid in the park. Her research was funded, in part, by an \$80,000 grant from the NPS. Source: *Florida International University News*
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - The parkway will receive \$127 million in Great American Outdoors Act funding to replace the historic Laurel Fork Bridge at milepost 248.8 and conduct a three-year repaving and rehabilitation project along 75 miles from Doughton Park to Grandfather Mountain. Both projects will be jointly managed by the NPS and Federal Highway Administration. Contracts for both projects were recently awarded and construction timelines are currently being finalized. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)

- *Buffalo National River* - *Arkansas Times* published [an article](#) outlining the history of conservation challenges and solutions to the Buffalo River throughout time, including the NPS' upcoming plans to rewrite its comprehensive river use and management plan. Source: *Arkansas Times*
- *Camp Nelson National Monument* - In celebration of the American Battlefield Trust's Park day on April 9, a group of volunteers helped replace about 200 pieces of fencing along a historic road used to move supplies during the Civil War. The group braved freezing temperatures and rain to get the project done. Source: [WTVQ](#)
- *Cumberland Gap National Historical Park* - On April 22, first responders from 22 city, county, local, state, and federal agencies will participate in a joint training exercise at Southeast Kentucky Community & Technical College that will mock a tunnel crash that could occur in the Cumberland Gap Tunnel and involve a response from any of those agencies. Source: [Cumberland Gap National Historical Park](#)
- *Death Valley National Park* - Fish biologists found the highest count of the endangered Devils Hole pupfish in the last 22 years: 175 individuals. Numbers over the last two decades have hovered around 90 individuals. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)
- *Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area* - On April 13, the Warren County (NJ) Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to support a resolution that reversed its support to designate Delaware Gap a "National Park." The board has previously passed a resolution in February supporting the designation. They stated that the organizations advocating for national park status have not been transparent enough about many matters of importance to county residents. Source: [WFMZ](#)
- *Florida National Parks* - A new study has found that the reef off Florida's southeastern Atlantic coast, including Biscayne, Everglades, and Dry Tortugas National Parks, is experiencing a rapidly depleting fish population. The study, published in *Fisheries Research*, reviews 20 years of survey data on 15 species. It found that almost every species had fallen below sustainable reproduction levels. The research suggests that recreational fishing may be playing a larger impact than commercial fishing. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - The park will begin a long-anticipated utilities construction project on June 1, including replacing seven miles of sewer, electrical, and telephone lines, as well as the lift station at the lodge to reduce the threat of sewage overflow. The contract was awarded to Ceccanti, Inc. of Tacoma, WA. The work will be done at night from 10pm to 6am, with nightly closures in place along the Going-to-the-Sun Road from near Apgar Campground to Sprague Creek Campground. At midnight each night, vehicles will be piloted through construction.

Source: [Glacier National Park](#)

- *Grand Teton National Park* - Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland announced a \$250,000 grant to secure a conservation easement in Teton County for a wildlife corridor for pronghorn antelope to travel into the park. Meanwhile, a federal court ruled against three conservation groups to allow Jonah Energy to continue its development of a gas field on Bureau of Land Management lands that are also on the migration route. Source: [WyoFile](#)
- *Grand Teton National Park* - Preliminary findings from an ongoing DNA study suggest there may be more bighorn sheep in the Teton Range than previously thought. In the past, biologists relied primarily on counts from helicopters, and estimates were around 100 individuals. DNA studies have allowed park scientists to discover the herd likely has 200 individuals. The NPS, U.S. Forest Service, and Wyoming Fish and Game continue to agree that the herd is vulnerable and needs special stewardship measures to maintain a viable population. Source: [Grand Teton National Park](#)
- *Missouri NPS sites* - Starting on April 16, the NPS has been hosting a wellness challenge across Missouri's seven park sites: Gateway Arch, George Washington Carver, Harry S. Truman, Ozark National Scenic Riverways, Ste. Genevieve, Ulysses S. Grant, and Wilson's Creek. Each site has activities related to physical, learning, and mental wellness, with the opportunity to earn a digital badge for completing categories at a site. Source: [Ozarks First](#)
- *Morristown National Historical Park* - The park has begun work on a multimillion-dollar roadway improvement project in the Jockey Hollow Area. Construction will include repaving roads and parking areas, cleaning culverts, installing new traffic gates and signage, and creating traffic calming measures to improve pedestrian visibility and safety. The project will last through late August and will include construction delays and closures on a rolling basis. Source: [Morristown National Historical Park](#)
- *Mount Rainier National Park* - The NPS has approved a permit proposal from the U.S. Geological Survey's Cascades Observatory to improve the lahar detection system at the park to predict and monitor volcanic mudflows down mountain valleys into the neighboring areas. The decision follows an environmental assessment and subsequent Finding of No Significant Impact. Equipment will be installed at nine locations, starting later this year. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Natchez National Historical Park* - At the Natchez Visitor Center courtyard on April 7, the Friends of the Forks of the Road Society celebrated Women's History Month and honored Joyce Arceneaux-Mathis and Sue Stedman for their support and efforts at purchasing and gifting the Forks of the Road slave market site to the NPS. Source: [The Natchez Democrat](#)

- *Olympic National Park* - A new study published in the *Journal of Geophysical Research: Earth Surface* found that the glaciers in the Olympic Mountains will have largely disappeared by 2070, which will have wide-ranging effects on local ecosystems and water demands for local communities. Source: [Phys.org](#)
- *Ozark National Scenic Riverways* - On April 6, Ranger Zack Swindle was awarded the Director's Leadership Award during Federal Law Enforcement Training Center graduation. The award is given to one member of each graduating class who most embodies the characteristics of a law enforcement leader, as selected by classmates. Source: [Ozark National Scenic Riverways](#)
- *Ozark National Scenic Riverways* - The park will replace seven deteriorating restroom facilities with flood-resistant pre-cast concrete vault toilets. Installation will begin this week, with completion by late May. They were funded by fees collected at the park. Source: [Ozark National Scenic Riverways](#)
- *Ozark National Scenic Riverways* - The park publicly released its final Roads and Trails Management Plan and Environmental Assessment, which was signed with a Finding of No Significant Impact. Source: [Ozark Radio News](#)
- *Petersburg National Battlefield* - On April 30, the park will partner with the Sons of Union Veterans and the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States to host a special event honoring the 200th birthday of the 18th President, Ulysses S. Grant. Source: [Petersburg National Battlefield](#)
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - On April 7, the California Coastal Commission voted unanimously to reject the strategies the park submitted to address water contamination and environmental impacts caused by cattle ranching in the park under the 2021 General Management Plan. This comes a year after the Commission had voted 5-4 to endorse the plan, pending the receipt within one year of more detailed strategies to reduce those impacts. The Commission said the strategies were lacking specificity, benchmarks, and enforcement. The park is planning to work with the Commission and state water quality regulators to submit a more detailed plan for review in September. Though the Commission does not have the authority to stop the park from implementing its GMP, they may pursue a lawsuit. Source: [Marin Independent Journal](#)
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - The *Los Angeles Times* published [an op-ed](#) by Theresa Harlan, who is of Coast Miwok heritage, arguing for stronger interpretation of Native history in the park and better access for modern-day Coast Miwok people. Source: *Los Angeles Times*
- *San Juan National Historic Site* - On April 4, Deputy Secretary of the Interior Tommy Beaudreau met with San Juan Mayor Miguel Romero at Castillo San Felipe del

Morro to highlight the \$8 million in projects from the Great American Outdoors Act that will benefit the park. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

- *Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* - On April 22, Caltrans will break ground on the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing over Highway 101. The project consists of a 210-foot long, 174-foot wide crossing, and about 12 acres of vegetation. Caltrans is leading the \$90 million project and will name the contractor in the next couple weeks, after final contracts are signed. The National Wildlife Federation serves as a key fundraising partner and Living Habitats, LLC out of Chicago, Illinois is leading the design. The project will take place in two phases, with completion expected in mid-2025. Source: [ENR California](#)
- *U.S. Park Police* - On April 8, Chief Pamela Smith announced that she will retire, effective April 30. She was appointed in February 2021. The announcement came two days after the Fraternal Order of Police U.S. Park Police Labor Committee requested the Office of Inspector General investigate alleged mismanagement, citing a failure to hire sufficient personnel. Deputy Chief Christopher Stock will serve as the interim chief. The OIG also recently released a report about significant operations concerns at the Park Police dispatch center (reported in the 3/9/22 Coalition Report). Source: [E&E News](#)
- *Utah National Parks* - A recent study by a team of economists at Utah State University tracked dramatic increases at Utah's five National Parks (in name) over the last ten years, correlating increases at Canyonlands, Capitol Reef, and Arches to the Utah Office of Tourism's "Mighty Five" marketing campaign, and increases at Zion and Bryce to broader national trends in national park visitation. Source: [KSL](#)
- *Valley Forge National Historical Park* - The park is repaving three miles of the park's most popular roads. The work started on April 18 and will be done in three phases throughout the spring, ending in mid-June. Source: [Valley Forge National Historical Park](#)
- *Wind Cave National Park* - The park has instituted a reservation system for cave tour tickets. Half of all tickets are now available on [recreation.gov](#) 120 days in advance, while the other half will be available for same-day purchase. Source: [Wind Cave National Park](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - *Ravalli Republic* published [an article](#) tracing the history and modern relationship between Native peoples and the park. Source: *Ravalli Republic*
- *Yellowstone National Park* - In honor of the park's 150-year anniversary, the park partner Yellowstone Forever is offering a unique "Inheritance Pass." For a \$1,500 donation, one can receive an annual pass to the park that is valid in 2172, as well as a complimentary annual pass for this year, to help preserve the park for the next

150 years. Source: [The Spokesman-Review](#), [Yellowstone Forever](#)

- *Yellowstone National Park - Smithsonian Magazine* ran [an article](#) outlining "five big changes scientists have documented" in the park's 150-year history. The story focuses on wolves, loss of habitat in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, bison, geysers, and climate. Source: *Smithsonian Magazine*
- *Zion National Park* - The park has started a project to improve the Canyon Overlook Trail, including the trail tread, masonry, and handrails. The trail will be closed mostly Mondays through Thursdays each week. The project is expected to be complete in early June. Source: [Zion National Park](#)

### **Personnel Changes**

- *Western Arctic National Parklands (Noatak National Preserve, Cape Krusenstern National Monument, Kobuk Valley National Park)* - Ray McPadden was selected as the new superintendent. Ray has over a decade of NPS experience, most recently as Program Manager for Environmental Quality at Yellowstone National Park. Source: [National Park Service Region 11](#)

### **Park People**

*Here we honor deceased park employees, as well as important news about Coalition Members. People are listed alphabetically by last name.*

#### **Deceased**

*In the April 6, 2022 Coalition Report, it was mistakenly reported that James Dale Workman was "the NPS Regional Director for the Midwest." He worked for the NPS for 21 years, including as an employment officer in Washington, D.C. and as a personnel officer in the Midwest Region. He retired in 1976. Source: JT Townsend, [npshistory.com](#). We apologize for the mistake.*

- Earl Devaney, 74, passed away on April 15. He spent a decade as the Department of the Interior's Inspector General, starting in 1999. Source: [E&E News](#)
- James "Jim" Fred Fitzpatrick, 90, passed away on April 4. He worked at Denali National Park as a young man, and he met his wife while working there. Source: [Legacy/The Daily Memphian](#)
- Albert Amos Hawkins, 93, passed away on March 27. He worked for the NPS for 40 years, starting at Shenandoah, Grand Canyon, and the Blue Ridge Parkway. He served as superintendent at Prince William Forest, Cumberland Gap, Mammoth Cave, and Delaware Water Gap, and led the development and opening of Steamtown National Historic Site. Source: [Bowling Green Daily News](#)
- Christopher "Chris" J. Long, 47, passed away on April 4. He worked for the NPS for many years, including as an interpretive ranger and wildland firefighter (as a crew



member, engine boss, and hotshot). He worked at Jewel Cave National Monument, Wind Cave National Park, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, Lake Meredith National Recreation Area, and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. Source:

[Legacy/The Berkshire Eagle](#)

- Patricia Hope Witt Torgerson, 83, passed away on April 1. In her retirement, she volunteered with the NPS' Trails and Rails Amtrak program, where she portrayed the "Mrs. William Clark," of the Lewis and Clark expeditions. Source:

[Legacy/Spokesman-Review](#)

### **Retired**

- On April 13, Jim, the pack mule, retired after 24 years of service in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. He started his career in 1998 when he was 15-months-old. He will spend his retirement grazing leisurely in the pasture. Source: [WBIR](#)

### **In the News**

- Roland "Ro" H. Wauer recently published a book, *Borderland Birds: Nesting Birds of the Southern Border*. Ro retired from the NPS after a 32-year career as a ranger and biologist. He served as Chief of Resource Management and Chief Scientist for the NPS in Washington, D.C., and also did work in Crater Lake, Death Valley, Pinnacles, Zion, Big Bend, Great Smoky Mountains, and Virgin Islands. He received the First Francis Jacot Award in 1988 and received a commendation from the Secretary of the Interior in 1980. Since retirement, Ro has written 28 books on national parks and wildlife, as well as two novels. Source: [EIN News](#)

### **Open for Comment**

*Items will stay on this list until public comment has closed.*

- *Amistad National Recreation Area* - Public comment is now open on a proposal to increase group campsite camping permit fees beginning in 2022. Comments can be submitted by email or mail. Source: [Amistad National Recreation Area](#)
- *Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area* - Public comment is now open on a comprehensive trails management plan and environmental assessment. [Comments](#) are open until April 30. Source: [Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area](#)
- *Chickasaw National Recreation Area* - Public comment is now open on proposed increase to parking, camping, and pavilion fees. Comments may be submitted by mail or email, and are open until May 15. Source: [Chickasaw National Recreation Area](#)
- *Death Valley National Park* - Public comment is now open on a right-of-way permit application for continued operation and maintenance of an existing microwave relay facility on Mormon Peak that provides landline and cell phone connection in the park. [Comments](#) are open until May 10. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)

- *Everglades National Park* - Public comment is now open on a proposed site plan for the Gulf Coast district, including a new public entryway off the roadway, elevating areas to address tidal impact and flooding, dredging the marina basin and boat channels, and a new visitor center. [Comments](#) are open until May 13. Source: [Everglades National Park](#)
- *Fire Island National Seashore* - Public comment is now open on an Off Road Vehicle Management program for the park. [Comments](#) are open until May 20. Source: [Fire Island National Seashore](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - Public comment is now open on a parking fee program in the park, as well as increased fees for campgrounds and backcountry camping. [Comments](#) are open until May 7. Source: [Knox News](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - The NPS and District of Columbia Department of Transportation have opened public comment on conversion of part of Ohio Drive into bicycle and pedestrian lanes. [Comments](#) are open until May 19. Source: [WJLA](#)
- *Olympic National Park* - Public comment is now open on the proposed rehabilitation of the Cape Alava and Sand Point Trails in the Ozette area. [Comments](#) are open until April 26. Source: [Peninsula Daily News](#)
- *Padre Island National Seashore* - Public comment is now open on a proposed housing replacement project, just south of the park's visitor center. [Comments](#) are open until April 22. Source: [Padre Island National Seashore](#)
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - Public comment is now open on management guidance for Tomales Point, particularly around drought conditions and tule elk. [Comments](#) are open until May 2. Source: [Point Reyes National Seashore](#)
- *Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway* - Public comment is now open on a land exchange of federally owned lands for privately owned lands to resolve encroachment and ingress/egress issues. Comments are open until April 30 and can be submitted by mail to park headquarters. Source: [Burnett County Sentinel](#)
- *Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve* - Public comment is now open on a Draft Accessibility Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. [Comments](#) are open until May 6. Source: [Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve](#)
- *Virgin Islands National Park* - Public comment is now open on a proposed land swap of an 11-acre parcel in Estate Catherineberg in the park with Whistling Cay, an 18-acre island north of St. John currently owned by the Virgin Islands territorial government. The exchange would allow for development of a K-12 public school on St. John. A preliminary, nonbinding agreement for the swap was signed in October

2020. [Comments](#) are open until April 27. Source: [The Virgin Islands Daily News](#)

- *War in the Pacific National Historical Park* - The NPS and Guam Waterworks Authority have opened public comment on a proposal to restore the Asan Springs water supply facility, which is partially on park land. [Comments](#) are open until April 30. Source: [Pacific Daily News](#)
- *Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve* - Public comment is now open on a Special Use Permit application for non-exclusive use of Slaven's Roadhouse from October 1, 2022 through February 1, 2023. Comments must be submitted by mail by May 5. Source: [NPS Region 11](#)

### **Other Department of the Interior News**

- *DOI wildlife corridor efforts* - On April 7, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland highlighted a number of initiatives the DOI is taking to advance its work on wildlife corridors. \$2.5 million in grants, matched by \$7 million in contributions, will be distributed to seven states and three Tribes for 13 projects. Furthermore, an agreement between the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society establishes work together at the National Conservation Training Center to meet joint conservation needs. The U.S. Geological Survey has published a report regarding ungulate migration in the Western United States so that various agencies and conservation groups can better work together in their planning. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$38 million in fish passage projects* - On April 14, the Department of the Interior announced that 40 fish passage projects in 23 states and Puerto Rico will receive nearly \$38 million in FY22 funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Fish Passage Program. The program has been around since 1999 and has removed or bypassed 3,202 barriers to fish passage. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

### **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.*

#### **Senate Actions**

**April 6** – The Senate passed:

- S. 270, to amend the Act entitled "Act to provide for the establishment of the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site in the State of Kansas, and for other purposes" to provide for inclusion of additional related sites in the National Park System.
- H.R. 3113, to require the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works to digitize and make publicly

- available geographic information system mapping data relating to public access to federal land and waters for outdoor recreation.
- S. Res. 582, designating the week of April 16 through April 24, 2022, as "National Park Week."

### **House Actions**

**April 5** – The Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands held a hearing entitled "Investing in Wildfire Management, Ecosystem Restoration, and Resilient Communities: Examining Implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law." Testimony was heard from Jeff Rupert, Director, Office of Wildland Fire, Department of the Interior; Jaelith Hall-Rivera, Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry, U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture; and Brian Ferebee, Chief Executive of Intergovernmental Relations, U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture.

**April 6** – The Committee on Natural Resources held a markup on the following, among other bills:

- H.R. 920, the "Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site Expansion Act;"
- H.R. 2626, the "Pullman National Historical Park Act."

H.R. 920 and H.R. 2626 were ordered reported, as amended.

**April 6** – The Committee on Oversight and Reform held a markup on several bills, including H.R. 7376, the "Honoring Civil Servants Killed in the Line of Duty Act." The bill would increase death gratuities and funeral allowances for federal employees killed in the line of duty. The bill was ordered reported, as amended.

### **Incidents**

*Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.*

#### **Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site**

##### **Wildfire burns part of park**

On April 12, a wildfire started on the south side of Highway 194, extending into the eastern section of the park. High winds fanned the flames and the fire burned 1,652 acres of park, private, and state wildlife area lands. 85% of the park's 800 acres burned. The park was temporarily closed to the public. Fire crews from eight agencies were able to protect the fort, historic objects on the grounds, and all of the park's animals. A significant number of the park's cottonwoods have burn damage, and an assessment for hazard trees and other post-fire hazards is ongoing. The fort reopened to the public on April 15, though the grounds remain closed for assessment and mitigation. Source: Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site ([4/13](#), [4/15](#))

#### **Blue Ridge Parkway**

##### **Car accident results in fatality**

On April 7, a 22-year-old passed away due to a motor vehicle collision near milepost 290.

It appears the driver was driving southbound and failed to negotiate a left-hand curve, leaving the roadway and colliding with a tree. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)

### **Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area Feds ask New Jersey DOT to clean their mess**

A New Jersey Department of Transportation work crew dumped a bunch of rip-rap along the Delaware River as part of a drainage improvement project alongside Route 80 near milepost 1.1. A local resident and activist inquired to the National Park Service and Army Corps of Engineers whether the highway agency had obtained proper permits to do so. The two federal agencies agreed that the proper permits were not acquired. After several months and meetings, the DOT agreed to voluntarily remove the rocks. Though the rip rap would likely be approved, the DOT did not properly consult with the Army Corps of Engineers or the state Department of Environmental Protection, and the project did not go through National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act guidelines. Source: [New Jersey Herald](#)

### **Dinosaur National Monument Disease found in rabbits**

Rabbit hemorrhagic disease, or RHDV2, has been found in wild cottontails in the park. The virus was first found in the U.S. in 2020. It is highly infectious, causes bloody froth to come out of the victims' mouths, and is almost always deadly for the rabbits. Though RHDV2 is not contagious to humans, NPS staff have warned visitors to stay away from any sick or dead rabbits, as they can sometimes carry other diseases, such as tularemia or plague. Source: [KIRO](#)

### **Dry Tortugas National Park Visitor passes away while snorkeling**

On April 7, a 74-year-old visitor was snorkeling along a Fort Jefferson wall by the beach with family when other visitors heard screams. Two bystanders brought the victim ashore and began CPR. The victim was airlifted by a Trauma Star helicopter to Lower Keys Medical Center in Key West, where they were pronounced dead. Source: [Miami Herald](#)

### **George Rogers Clark National Historical Park Lamppost covers stolen**

Covers from 22 bronze lampposts were recently stolen from the park. The lampposts were installed in 1932 and surround the park grounds, including the memorial to George Rogers Clark. Each panel cover is 14 by 11 inches and weighs about 9 pounds. The park is seeking any information the public may have. Source: [Charlotte Observer](#), [George Rogers Clark National Historical Park](#)

### **Grand Teton National Park Visitor charged for driving 130mph**

A 37-year-old has been charged with 10 misdemeanors from incidents on March 27 within the park, including reckless driving, having an open alcoholic container, speeding at 132 mph, driving under the influence, having expired license permits, attempting to elude police officers, driving on a suspended license, lack of insurance coverage, and failure to display a license plate. The individual was arrested after a high speed chase that involved five officers and ended when the suspect ran into traffic at the Gros Ventre roundabout. The suspect pleaded not guilty and was released on bail. Source: [Jackson Hole News and Guide](#)

## **Rock Creek Park**

### **Fire at amphitheater**

On April 10, the Carter Barron Amphitheater stage caught fire. D.C. Fire and Emergency Medical Services officials said that the fire burned underneath the stage, but the cause has not yet been identified. They were able to extinguish the flames. The amphitheater has been closed since 2017 due to structural issues, and the NPS is working to secure funding to design and rehabilitate the venue. It remains closed to the public. Source: [WTOP](#)

## **Rocky Mountain National Park**

### **Elk head poached**

On March 20, a somewhat famous bull elk who had several nicknames, including "Bruno," "Kahuna", and "Big Thirds." passed away due to natural causes. The bull was known for its distinctly large antlers and was widely photographed in the park. Some time between March 20-22, someone illegally removed the elk's head, which had a single antler attached. The other antler had already been shed naturally by the animal. The NPS is seeking any information the public may have about the incident. Source: [Gear Junkie](#)

## **Shenandoah National Park**

### **2 structures burn**

Around 2 AM on April 18, the Blackrock guest cabin and a small maintenance building at Big Meadows Lodge burned. NPS staff and fire departments from Elkton, Luray, and Stanley responded. The lodge is operated by the park's concessioner, Delaware North Corporation. The buildings were not occupied because the lodge is not yet open for the season. The cause of the fire is unknown and the incident is under investigation. Source: [WJLA](#)

## **Yellowstone National Park**

### **Kidnapping suspect arrested in park**

On April 6, a person was arrested in the park and charged with kidnapping associated with a 2018 "murder for hire" in Vermont. The person allegedly posed as a U.S. Marshal

and told the victim that he was being charged with racketeering and he was taken away in handcuffs. The victim's body was found in a snowbank with gunshot wounds. It is unclear how the suspect was found and arrested in the park. Source: [Cowboy State Daily](#)

## **Yosemite National Park**

### **Suspect found guilty of sexual assault**

After a three-day trial, a U.S. Attorney announced that a 31-year-old was found guilty of several sexual abuse-related charges. The suspect was an employee of the concessioner living in Yosemite Valley at the time of the incident. The perpetrator entered the victim's cabin while the victim slept and began sexually assaulting him. The victim yelled for help from a neighbor, who helped remove the perpetrator from the cabin. The perpetrator will be sentenced on July 8, facing the possibility of life in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Source: [KMPH](#)

### **Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents**

- *Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* - A necropsy report was recently released for two mountain lion kittens who were discovered in an orphaned litter of four in a Thousand Oaks office complex last November. The kittens died a few days after they were discovered. The kittens had residues of three different rodenticide compounds in their livers, as well as heavy flea infestation, inflammation in the brain, and feline parvovirus. It is the first time a mountain lion in the region has had evidence of parvo and they are the youngest documented mountain lions to have had exposure to rodenticide. After failed attempts to allow the two other kittens to be reunited with their mother, they were taken into permanent captivity at the Orange County Zoo. Source: [Santa Monica Mirror](#)

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- Regular Correspondent: Don Hellmann
- Issue Contributors: JT Townsend, Bill Walters

If you see something that might be of interest to Coalition members, send it to [report@protectnps.org](mailto:report@protectnps.org).

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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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