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The Coalition Report

Wednesday, April 3, 2024

Coalition Actions

Joining with NPCA, the Sierra Club, and the Ohio Environmental Council, the Coalition submitted detailed [comments](#) on the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's Supplement to the Regional Haze Implementation Plan for the Second Period.

The Coalition submitted [comments](#) on the Everglades Wilderness Stewardship Plan.

We joined with numerous organizations in a [letter](#) to the House Committee on Natural Resources expressing opposition to H.R. 5499, the Congressional Oversight of the Antiquities Act.

The Coalition joined with numerous organizations in [a letter](#) to members of the U.S. House of Representatives expressing opposition to H.R. 6009, the Restoring American Energy Dominance Act. The proposed bill would require the Bureau of Land Management to withdraw its proposed onshore oil and gas leasing rule.

We submitted [a letter](#) to the President and U.S. Senators from Oregon in support of efforts to designate the Owyhee Canyonlands 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.

- *Supreme Court throws out challenges to Antiquities Act* - On April 1, the Supreme Court rejected two lawsuits challenging the expansion of Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument (administered by the Bureau of Land Management) by former President Barack Obama under the Antiquities Act. The lawsuits claimed the expansion was a misuse of the Act because it blocked timber harvest levels mandated by Congress for those lands. Source: [E&E News](#)
- *Executive Order supporting women's history in national parks* - President Joe Biden recently signed an executive order to strengthen the recognition of women's history across the National Park System, including an assessment of current representation among parks, identification of women and girls across U.S. history that merit consideration for recognition through a theme study, and solicitation of recommendations from the NPS Advisory Board on opportunities to improve recognition. Source: [Palm Springs Tribune](#)
- *OIG report about NPS childcare centers* - A recent report by the Office of the Inspector General shows that there is a "general ambiguity about roles and responsibilities that may affect the NPS' ability to ensure a safe and appropriate childcare setting." Special use permits for childcare centers were found to be out of date and state oversight and requirements had not been met. The report recommends clarifying oversight roles between the NPS and state governments and issuing new guidance for health and safety inspections, which were "almost 40 years old." Source: [FEDweek](#)
- *Chicago supports local national park effort* - On March 19, three precincts in Ward 49 in Chicago, Illinois, voted in favor of a referendum asking whether the city should pursue national park designation along the shore of Lake Michigan. Source: [NBC Chicago](#)
- *Research shows federal employees "effective and committed, not subversive"* - *The Conversation* published [an article](#) outlining the history and scope of federal employees, citing research that workers "are generally high-performing, impartial, and minimally corrupt compared with other countries' civil servants." Furthermore, civil servants are generally careful to follow legal orders from the current administration, even when disagreeing with the ideals behind them. Source: *The Conversation*
- *Book about collaborations between NPS and Tribes* - On March 12, a new book, *National Parks, Native Sovereignty: Experiments in Collaboration*, was published by the University of Oklahoma Press. The book is co-edited by Christina Gish Hill, Matthew J. Hill, and Brooke Neely. The book aims to discuss best practices for collaboration between public lands and Tribal governments." Source: [Iowa State University News Service](#)
- *NPS law enforcement ranger memoir* - A new memoir by John Goodwin, *Echoes of*

the Badge: Stories From a National Park Service Career, was published in January. John was a law enforcement ranger with the NPS for 27 years. Source: [WebWire](#)

- *Fictional NPS investigative Netflix series - Netflix* will produce a limited series called "Untamed," which focuses on a special agent for the NPS "who works to enforce human law in nature's vast wilderness." Source: [Variety](#)

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *American Battlefield Protection Program* (an NPS-administered program) - The program released highlights from its 2023 preservation planning grants, including an infographic and statistics. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Assateague Island National Seashore* - On April 1, the park began a project to complete emergency shore stabilization and reconfigure the parking lot at Bayside Beach and Picnic Area. The parking lot will remain closed during the project. It is expected to be complete in two weeks, weather pending. Source: [Assateague Island National Seashore](#)
- *Big Thicket National Preserve* - The National Parks Conservation Association published [an article](#) about their efforts to restore red-cockaded woodpeckers and longleaf pine forests to the park, working closely with the NPS and volunteers. Source: National Parks Conservation Association
- *Biscayne National Park* - On March 29, a federal court ruled in favor of the National Parks Conservation Association that the NPS violated the law by failing to implement a marine reserve zone in the park in a timely fashion. As a result of the verdict, the park must designate the marine reserve zone "as soon as practicable." The lawsuit was filed in 2020, based on a 2015 Record of Decision that called for the establishment of a no-fishing marine reserve covering 6% of the park. Source: [National Parks Conservation Association](#)
- *Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park* - The park was awarded \$9 million in Great American Outdoors Act funding to upgrade the Old Slater Mill and the Wilkinson Mill waterwheel, including historic restoration, accessibility upgrades, and a wheel exhibit. Source: [Rhode Island Current](#)
- *Cape Cod National Seashore* - On April 8, the recently re-authorized Federal Advisory Commission for the park will conduct its first meeting. The purpose of the commission is to consult with the Department of the Interior about matters relating to development in the park, including acquisition and zoning regulations. It is made up of 16 individuals appointed by the Secretary of the Interior from six outer Cape towns, Barnstable County, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Source:

[Cape Cod National Seashore](#)

- *Cape Cod National Seashore* - The park has opened a Prospectus for a 10-year concession opportunity at Highland Links, including a 9-hole golf course and its associated operations. Applications are due June 28. Source: [Cape Cod National Seashore](#)
- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - *Spectrum News 1* published [an article](#) about the park's \$19 million, 18-month restoration of the Cape Hatteras lighthouse. Source: *Spectrum News 1*
- *Cedar Breaks National Monument* - On April 1, the park will increase entrance and campground fees. Source: [Cedar Breaks National Monument](#)
- *Curecanti National Recreation Area* - On March 25, the park opened the Lake Fork boat launch. This was an unusually early opening due to only 60% ice coverage on the lake. Boats with electric or gas-powered engines are required to undergo an inspection to prevent aquatic invasive species, and many have been launching from the shore to access the open waters. With the boat launch open, boats can now be inspected before launching. Source: [Curecanti National Recreation Area](#)
- *Death Valley National Park* - Starting on April 30, the park will implement a new online backcountry permit system for specific areas of the park, including Cottonwood Canyon, Marble Canyon, Echo Canyon, Hole in the Wall, and Greenwater Valley Roads. Reservations will be made available on *Recreation.gov* up to six months in advance of start dates. Backcountry roadside camping permits will now cost \$10 per night, while wilderness backpacking permits will cost \$10 per permit. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)
- *Everglades National Park* - On April 1, the park will close the Gulf Coast area of the park (Everglades City) to continue construction on the new Marjory Stoneman Douglas Visitor Center. The site has been under construction since October 2023. The next phases of construction will include expansion of the marina basin, a new seawall, new utilities, and rehabilitation of the canoe and kayak launch. The canoe and kayak launch and marina basin are expected to reopen later this year. The visitor center is expected to be complete in late 2025. Source: [Everglades National Park](#)
- *Gateway Arch National Park* - The park has received \$17 million in Great American Outdoors Act funding to restore the Old Courthouse, improve accessibility, and add new exhibits about the Dred Scott Case. Source: [Spectrum News](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - On March 20, the park announced that it had raised over \$10 million in recreation fee revenue from its first year of parking tag sales and an increase in frontcountry and backcountry camping fees in 2023.

The funding will allow for 25 additional staff members, search and rescue efforts, and improvements to roads, parking lots, and facilities. Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)

- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - *Scientific American* published [an article](#) about the threats of climate change on the park, including temperature challenges to tree species and the spread of the balsam woolly adelgid. Source: *Scientific American*
- *Gulf Islands National Seashore* - The park is partnering with Mississippi State University's Coastal Research and Extension Center to remove marine debris from NPS-managed barrier islands in Mississippi over the next three years. The project will also include a visitor education component. Source: [Gulf Islands National Seashore](#)
- *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - On April 8, the park will begin a project to remove the former Jaggar Museum and two U.S. Geological Survey buildings. They were damaged during the summit collapse and eruption of Kīlauea volcano in 2018. The project is expected to take several months. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)
- *Mammoth Cave National Park* - On March 22, the park celebrated the completion of a two-year remodeling project on the Mammoth Cave Hotel. The project was funded by the Great American Outdoors Act and the park's concessioner, ExplorUS. It includes a new roof, energy efficient windows and insulation, updates to the interior lobby, four accessible lodging rooms, a conference room, a new coffee shop, and upgrades to two hotel restaurants. Source: [Mammoth Cave National Park](#)
- *Mammoth Cave National Park* - On March 27, the park reopened the Sloan's Crossing Pond trail and picnic area. It had been closed since October 2023 for a rehabilitation project to the wooden boardwalk and repair of the overlook and seating areas. Source: [Mammoth Cave National Park](#)
- *Mojave National Preserve* - The *Los Angeles Times* published [an article](#) about the effects of large wildfires on the ecosystems and historic resources at the park. Several park staff are quoted in the article. Source: *Los Angeles Times*
- *Mount Rainier National Park* - The NPS and Federal Highway Administration have approved a plan to replace the historic Fryngpan Creek Bridge with a newer bridge that meets current structural and safety standards. The project will begin in 2026 and be completed in 2029, pending funding availability. Source: [Mount Rainier National Park](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - *Politico* published [an article](#) about the

- challenges for Washington, DC, residents in engaging in the NPS' many municipal-style parks with federally-focused regulations. The article cites the recent termination of philanthropic partnership status for Georgetown Heritage, as well as tensions with neighbors around poor maintenance of small, local green spaces, as examples of this conflict. Source: *Politico*
- *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* - *HuffPost* published [an article](#) about ongoing efforts to get human remains and cultural objects repatriated to Native Tribes under new NAGPRA guidance released in January. The article highlights the challenges to repatriating some items, as well as recent expedited efforts by many high profile educational institutions to repatriate items they have had in their collections for decades. Source: *HuffPost*
 - *New River Gorge National Park and Preserve* - On March 21, the park held a ribbon cutting for upgrades to the Canyon Rim Visitor Center, including new exhibits and a revamped theater. The project took about five years to complete. Source: [WV Public Broadcasting](#)
 - *North Cascades National Park* - The NPS and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released [a final Environmental Impact Statement](#) for a grizzly bear restoration plan for the North Cascades Ecosystem. The preferred alternative would designate grizzly bears in the North Cascades a "nonessential experimental population," allowing them to be reintroduced with management tools that include deterrence, incidental take, and preemptive relocation options to prevent human-bear conflicts. A final record of decision on the EIS is expected "in the weeks ahead." Source: [North Cascades National Park](#)
 - *Obed Wild and Scenic River* - On April 2, the NPS announced a Finding of No Significant Impact for an operations permit for ENREMA, LLC, to conduct "nonfederal oil and gas operations" from existing wells within wild and scenic river lands. Source: [Obed Wild and Scenic River](#)
 - *Olympic National Park* - The park has instituted a permit system for overnight trips on the East Fork Quinault River and Enchanted Valley on a "trial basis." The park will collect public comments about the permitting from May 15 through October 15. Source: [Olympic National Park](#)
 - *Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Grants Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On March 27, the Department of the Interior announced the selection of 14 projects in 11 states for locally-led park projects in communities with limited access to outdoor recreation opportunities. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
 - *Redwood National and State Parks* - On March 19, the NPS, California State Parks, Save the Redwoods League, and the Yurok Tribe signed a Memorandum of

- Understanding to transfer 'O Rew, a 125-acre property from Save the Redwoods League to the Yurok Tribe. The agreement describes a long-term co-management strategy among the four agencies as a gateway to the park for the public, including a new visitor and cultural center and trails. It is the first-ever cooperative arrangement for the NPS to co-manage Tribally-owned land. Source: [Redwood National and State Parks](#)
- *Sagamore Hill National Historic Site* - On May 1, the park will increase the fee of guided tours by \$5. Source: [Sagamore Hill National Historic Site](#)
 - *San Antonio Missions National Historical Park* - On April 2, the park released its 2023 World Heritage Annual Accomplishment Report, outlining the partnership efforts to protect and preserve San Antonio Missions World Heritage Site. Source: [San Antonio Missions National Historical Park](#)
 - *Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site* - On April 6, the park and the Sand Creek Massacre Foundation will open a new temporary (two-year) visitor center exhibit, "The Sand Creek Massacre: The Betrayal that Changed Cheyenne and Arapaho People Forever." The exhibit was funded by the Sand Creek Massacre Foundation and National Park Foundation. It was designed and built by History Colorado with assistance and input from the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Northern Arapaho Tribe, and the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. Source: [Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site](#)
 - *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - On March 28, the park released its 2023 annual report, including community engagement, visitor experience improvements, and volunteer hours. Source: [Valles Caldera National Preserve](#)
 - *Valley Forge National Historical Park* - On April 2, the park issued a Request for Proposals to lease and operate the Philander Chase Knox House as an event venue. It has been leased since 2015. The RFP is due June 3. The new lease will begin "no earlier than May 1, 2026." Source: [Valley Forge National Historical Park](#)
 - *Virgin Islands National Park* - The park recently installed a 60-panel solar system and more energy-efficient utilities and structural elements at the Cruz Bay Visitor Center. The project was supported by the National Park Foundation. Source: [Clean Technica](#)
 - *Virgin Islands National Park* - On March 25 and 27, the park held two "preliminary listening sessions" to record local residents' understanding of historic buildings, archaeology sites, and significant landscapes within the park. The sessions were facilitated by academics from University of California, Berkeley, and Stanford University. Source: [St. Thomas Source](#)
 - *Yellowstone National Park* - Superintendent Cam Sholly received American Forests'

2023 Forest Resilience Champion Award for his efforts conserving whitebark pine in the park and working jointly with other partners. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

Personnel Changes

- *Chamizal National Memorial, Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument* - Gerardo Gonzalez was selected as the new superintendent. Gerardo is a retired United States Army veteran with strong ties to the El Paso community. He begins his new role on April 8. Source: [Chamizal National Memorial](#)
- *Cumberland Island National Seashore, Fort Frederica National Monument* - Melissa Trenchik was selected as the new superintendent. Melissa has 28 years of federal public lands experience, 11 of those at the NPS, most recently as the chief of resource stewardship, science, interpretation and education at Buffalo National River. She starts her new role on April 21. Source: [Fort Federica National Monument](#)
- *Saguaro National Park* - Scott Stonum was selected as the new superintendent. Scott has over 35 years of NPS experience, most recently as superintendent at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. He begins his new role on April 7. Source: [Saguaro National Park](#)

Park People

Here we honor deceased park employees, as well as important news about Coalition Members and other former park employees or volunteers. People are listed alphabetically by last name.

Deceased

- Cheryl Mary Carson, 69, passed away on March 15. Cheryl worked at Indiana Dunes National Park for over 28 years, "most of which she served as [a] computer analyst." Source: [Smith, Bizzell, and Warner Funeral Home](#)
- Lou Conter, 102, passed away recently. Lou was the final surviving crewmember aboard the *USS Arizona* during the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. Lou was a member of the USS Arizona Reunion Association and attended the 74th anniversary of the attacks at the Pearl Harbor National Memorial. Source: [USA Today](#)
- Patricia A. Delany, 80, passed away on March 20. Patricia worked for a time "with the rangers in Rocky Mountain National Park protecting the elk herd." Source: [Legacy/Cress Funeral and Cremation Service - Madison West](#)
- Ralph Mihan passed away recently. He worked for 37 years as regional legal counsel for the western region of the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Source: [Marin Independent Journal](#)

- Frank Mills recently passed away. Frank worked for the NPS for many years, and retired in 2012 as deputy superintendent at Statue of Liberty National Monument. Source: National Park Service Employees Facebook group
- Elizabeth "Betty" Helen (Zastrow) Schuster, 81, passed away on March 17. Betty was married to Bob Schuster, a seasonal ranger in Glacier National Park for 57 summers. Betty accompanied Bob on many of his backcountry patrols. Source: [Legacy/Stehn Family Chapels](#), Tom Tschohl
- Cynthia M. Worthington, 90, passed away on December 26, 2023. Cynthia worked at many parks, including Dinosaur National Monument, Whitman Mission National Historic Site, El Morro National Monument, and San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. Source: [Cook Family Funeral Home and Cremation Service](#), Anne Worthington

Retired (or soon to be)

- Leah McGinnis, the superintendent at Saguaro National Park, recently retired. Source: [Saguaro National Park](#)
- G. Glenn Oder will retire from the Fort Monroe Authority on October 1. He has served as the Executive Director for 12 years. Source: [Virginia Business](#)

In the News

- On February 15, the Western National Parks Association bestowed their 2024 Edward B. Danson Award on Michael Soukup, an archaeologist focused in the Southwest. He has served on the WNPA board of directors and the NPS Advisory Board. He is the recipient of a 1986 Department of the Interior Conservation Award and the Coalition's [2022 Hartzog Award](#). Source: [Travel and Tour World](#)

Open for Comment

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

- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - Public comment is [open through April 10](#) on a proposed plan to pave a 400-foot-long section of road at the intersection of Lighthouse Road and Flowers Ridge Road to improve community access and reduce maintenance costs. Source: [Cape Hatteras National Seashore](#)
- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through April 30](#) on an NPS easement and special use permit to the City and County of San Francisco for a project at South Ocean Beach that will fix an issue with wastewater system infrastructure due to eroding bluffs and rising sea levels. Source: [Golden Gate National Recreation Area](#)

- *Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve* - Public comment is [open through April 19](#) on a draft trail improvement plan at Barataria Preserve. Source: [Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve](#)
- *Kenai Fjords National Park* - Public comment is [open through April 30](#) on a plan for next steps in the Glass-Heifner Mine clean-up project. Source: [Kenai Fjords National Park](#)
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - The NPS and Federal Aviation Administration have [opened public comment through April 19](#) on a proposed commercial air tour management voluntary agreement. Source: [Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)
- *Theodore Roosevelt National Park* - Public comment is open through April 28 on a plan to increase campground fees at the Cottonwood Campground and Group Site, Juniper Campground and Group Site, and the Roundup Group Horse Camp. Source: [Theodore Roosevelt National Park](#)
- *Thomas Edison National Historical Park* - Public comment has been [reopened through May 1](#) on a proposed fee schedule for its electric vehicle charging stations. A January public comment period press release incorrectly transposed the proposed rate per kilowatt hour. Source: [Thomas Edison National Historical Park](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - Public comment is [open through April 5](#) on a proposal to implement a 30-day mandatory dry time for some types of boats on park waters to prevent the spread of invasive aquatic species. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)
- *Zion National Park* - Public comment is [open through April 10](#) on a plan to improve roads and trails in the park's South Entrance Area. Source: [Zion National Park](#)

Other Department of the Interior News

- *Judge affirms DOI sovereignty over state* - On March 29, a federal judge sided with the Department of the Interior in its lawsuit against the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for attempting to open the Kuskokwim for fishing by all state residents in 2021, in conflict with a federal closure that had opened fishing only to "federally qualified" subsistence anglers. The court agreed that the federal closure was the standing authority, in accordance with the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980. Source: [Northern Journal](#)
- *Strengthened rules for endangered species* - On March 28, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service finalized three rules that strengthen the processes for listing species, designating critical habitat, and consultation with other federal agencies. They will also ensure a science-based approach to designations under

the Endangered Species Act. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

- *Reduction of oil and gas waste* - On March 27, the Bureau of Land Management published a final rule that will require measures to avoid wasteful practices during the production of oil and gas on federal and Tribal lands, including leak fixes and upgrades to modern technology. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *2 new wind projects approved* - On March 26 and April 2, respectively, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management approved the Sunrise Wind project and the New England Wind project, both commercial-scale, offshore wind energy projects off the Eastern seaboard. They are the seventh and the eighth wind projects approved under the Biden Administration. Source: Department of the Interior ([3/26](#), [4/2](#))
- *\$353 million to Gulf states* - On March 29, the Department of the Interior announced \$353.6 million in energy revenues to four states for coastal restoration, conservation, and hurricane protection. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$30 million for Upper Colorado River Basin* - On March 29, the Bureau of Reclamation announced \$30 million in funding for 114 projects that will conserve Colorado River Water in the Upper Colorado River Basin. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$12 million for habitat* - On March 26, the Department of the Interior and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation announced \$11.8 million for 10 projects in seven states to restore habitat connectivity and migration corridors. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$11 million for landscape-scale restoration* - On March 22, the Department of the Interior announced \$11 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for 29 locally led, landscape-scale restoration projects across 18 states and the District of Columbia. 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 of legislative and congressional affairs for the National Park Service, and Chris Soller, former superintendent of Fire Island National Seashore and legislative specialist for the National Park Service.

March 19 - President Joe Biden transmitted the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget to both the Senate and the House of Representatives. Both houses referred the budget request to their respective Appropriation Committees.

March 11 - The National Park Service issued a press release regarding the President's FY25 budget submission. It states:

"The Biden-Harris administration submitted to Congress today the President's National Park Service (NPS) budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2025. The \$3.57 billion budget request balances investments in key priorities with necessary funding for day-to-day operation of the National Park System, while maintaining fiscal responsibility and adhering to tight budget constraints...

...a Look Inside the Numbers (by appropriation)

Operation of the National Park System – This is the primary operations funding for the National Park Service and the 2025 budget includes \$3.09 billion broken out as follows:

- \$431.0 million for resource stewardship
- \$299.5 million for visitor services
- \$456.6 million for park protection
- \$974.0 million for facility operations and maintenance
- \$709.7 million for park support
- \$219.5 million for external administrative costs

Construction – Funds construction projects, equipment replacement, and management and the 2025 budget includes \$237.2 million broken out as follows:

- \$124.7 million for line-item construction
- \$41.9 million for special programs, including \$16.9 million for housing improvement
- \$15.2 million for construction planning
- \$37.7 million for construction management and operations
- \$17.7 million for management planning

Centennial Challenge - The Centennial Challenge program is instrumental in garnering and fostering strong partnerships. All Federal funds must be matched on at least a 1:1 basis. The 2025 budget includes \$13 million for this program.

National Recreation and Preservation - This appropriation supports local community efforts to preserve natural and cultural resources. The 2025 budget includes \$84.4 million broken out as follows:

- \$19.6 million for Natural Programs
- \$44.2 million for Cultural Programs
- \$0.5 million for Environmental Compliance
- \$2.1 million for International Park Affairs
- \$18.1 million for Heritage Partnership Programs

Historic Preservation Fund – Supports Historic Preservation Offices in States, Territories, and Tribal lands to preserve historically and culturally significant sites and provides competitive grants to other entities. The 2025 budget includes \$151.4 million for these programs broken out as follows:

- \$62.2 million for grants to State Historic Preservation Offices
- \$23.0 million for Tribal Historic Preservation Offices
- \$2.5 million for Tribal Heritage Grants
- \$11.0 million for grants-in-aid to Historically Black Colleges and Universities
- \$12.5 million for Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants
- \$30.3 million for competitive grants to preserve historic sites
- \$10.0 million for Save America's Treasures grants

Senate Actions

Nothing to report due to the Senate taking no actions of interest to the National Park Service/System and several days of recess and pro forma sessions.

House Actions

Nothing to report due to the House taking no actions of interest to the National Park Service/System and several days of recess and pro forma sessions.

Incidents

Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.

Amistad National Recreation Area

Zebra mussel infestation

On March 20, the park announced that it has detected a population of invasive zebra mussels in some areas along the lakeshore. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has designated it "infested" with the species. The park is monitoring the extent of the infestation. Source: [Amistad National Recreation Area](#)

Appalachian National Scenic Trail

Norovirus outbreak

On March 26, the NPS announced that there is an increasing number of reports of gastrointestinal illness among hikers on the trail in North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee. It is suspected to be norovirus. Source: [WLOS](#)

Big Bend National Park

Suicide

On March 20, an 80-year-old was found deceased on the Grapevine Hills Road. The scene was investigated by the NPS, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Texas Rangers. The cause of death was determined to be a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Source: [Big Bend National Park](#)

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area

Deceased individual

On March 29, visitors discovered a deceased 23-year-old in the water at Yahoo Falls. The individual was pronounced dead at the scene. Responding agencies included the NPS, McCreary County (KY), Whitley City Fire Department and Ambulance Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife. An investigation of the incident is underway. Source: [Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area](#)

Blue Ridge Parkway

Wildfire

On March 30, a wildfire started near the Peaks of Otter area. Several trails were closed to manage the blaze. On March 31, the fire was contained at 12.6 acres. Responding agencies included the NPS, U.S. Forest Service, and Bedford (VA) Fire Department. Trails remained closed through April 1 to allow power company personnel access to make repairs. No structures were affected by the fire. A preliminary investigation "indicates the cause of the fire to be a downed power line." Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area

Rabid raccoon bite

On March 14, a visitor was bitten by a raccoon while hiking on the McDade Recreational Trail between Bushkill Access and the Valley View Campground. The raccoon later tested positive for rabies. Source: [Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Road cracks

On March 22, the park closed Carlos Campbell Overlook on Newfound Gap Road for the NPS and Federal Highway Administration to assess cracks in the pavement and sidewalk. The overlook will reopen after an assessment and any needed repairs are complete.

Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

Inappropriate offerings

The park recently made an announcement on its social media asking visitors to not leave non-traditional offerings that "harm the environment and detract from the natural beauty of Kīlauea," such as meat and fish, which can rot and attract animals. It is a traditional practice by Native Hawaiians to leave offerings (*ho'okupu*) to pay respect to Pelehonuamea at the volcano. The park asks that visitors consider more traditional offerings or other types of expression, such as prayer, chants, or dance. Source: [Big Island Video News](#)

Lincoln Memorial

Fire

On March 28, an accidental fire was caused while a generator was being refueled. One individual was taken to the hospital with "serious but non-life-threatening injuries." The fire burned a kiosk near the memorial that has information about prisoners of war and other "military-related causes." The kiosk is managed by permit by Warriors, Inc. An investigation is ongoing. Source: [CNN](#)

Point Reyes National Seashore

Garbage truck out of service

Several weeks ago, the singular garbage truck at the park broke down, leaving the park with no collection services. Many dumpsters and trash cans are currently full, and visitors are being asked to take their garbage home. Some trash has been transported off site to a lot, waiting to be hauled away. The truck repairs are expected to take another two weeks to complete. Source: [ABC7](#)

Rocky Mountain National Park

Avalanche

On March 21, two backcountry skiers in the Ptarmigan Fingers area above Odessa Lake got caught in an avalanche while ascending a slope. One skier was able to exit quickly, while the other was carried downward approximately 600 feet. Neither was hurt in the incident. Source: [Powder](#)

Saguaro National Park

Stinknet watch

On March 28, the park published a press release asking visitors and neighboring communities to be on the lookout for stinknet, a flowering plant that is an aggressive invasive species. The plant is currently flowering in other parts of southern Arizona and rapidly spreading around Tucson and Pima County. The park asks that any visitors report observations through [Stinknet.org](#) and take special care to not walk near or on the plant. Source: [Saguaro National Park](#)

San Juan National Historic Site

Lawsuit over plan to trap cats

On March 28, a non-profit called Alley Cat Allies filed a lawsuit against the NPS over its plan to remove approximately 200 stray cats that live on the grounds of the park. The plan included contracting with an animal welfare organization to remove the cats and determine adoption or other appropriate actions. If the organization was not successful within six months, the NPS would then hire a "removal agency." Alley Cat Allies is suing over the short time limit, arguing it is not enough time to round up the cats. They also

allege that the plan violates the National Environmental Protection Act. Source: [The Guardian](#)

Shenandoah National Park

Wildfire

On March 20, a wildfire started in the area of Rocky Branch. As of March 22, it had burned 1,188 acres and was 10% contained. No structures are currently threatened. Responding agencies include the NPS, Luray Fire Department, and Virginia Department of Forestry. Closures are in place, including Skyline Drive from Thornton Gap (mile 31.5) to Mathews Arm (mile 22.1). The cause of the fire is unknown. Source: [Shenandoah National Park](#)

Valles Caldera National Preserve

Lawsuit over eagle take

On March 25, the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility filed a lawsuit against the NPS for Director Chuck Sams' decision to allow the Jemez Pueblo to kill an eagle for cultural purposes. PEER alleges that the decision was made counter to NPS regulations that prohibit the taking of wildlife. PEER has stated that the NPS has ignored two Freedom of Information Act requests for documents related to the decision. [*Editor note: Former Coalition Chair Mike Murray is quoted from a November statement, stating concern about the precedent the action may set.*] Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)

Whiskeytown National Recreation Area

Vehicle theft

On March 17, a visitor reported a purse and wallet stolen from their vehicle in the area of Clair A. Hill Whiskeytown Dam. Surveillance cameras later showed two suspects making fraudulent transactions at several businesses in Redding, California, utilizing credit cards from the theft. The park has released images of the two individuals and is seeking any information that the public may have. Source: [Whiskeytown National Recreation Area](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - On March 24, the park expanded the size of the closure at Buxton Beach due to reports of petroleum odors and sheen on the ocean water. The Coast Guard's Sector North Carolina has responded and is working with park staff to monitor the situation. A section of the beach has been closed since September 1, 2023 (see [9/6/23](#) and [3/6/24 Coalition Reports](#)). The park will soon be meeting with the Coast Guard and Army Corps of Engineers to discuss next actions. Source: [Cape Hatteras National Seashore](#)

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- Regular Correspondent: Don Hellmann, Chris Soller
- Issue Contributors: Steve Hastings, Tom Tschohl, Ann Worthington

If you see something that might be of interest to Coalition members, send it to 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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