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The Coalition Report

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

Coalition Actions

The Coalition joined with three organizations in submitting [comments](#) on the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed approval of Massachusetts' Regional Haze State Implementation Plan for the second planning period. The letter requests the EPA address three specific concerns before issuing its final approval.

We joined with six organizations in submitting [comments](#) to the Bureau of Land Management Wyoming Office's 2024 Second Quarter Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale Draft Environmental Impact Statement and draft Finding of No Significant Impact. The Coalition also joined with eight organizations in providing scoping [comments](#) to Bureau of Land Management Wyoming Office's 2024 Third Quarter Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale. Among other things, the letters both recommend pausing all sales until the proposed Fluid Mineral Leases and Leasing Process Rule is finalized.

Coalition Executive Council member Jeff Mow was quoted in an [an article](#) in the *Billings Gazette* on the importance and impact of Great American Outdoors Act funding.

We submitted [a letter](#) to President Joe Biden in support of the designation the Kw'itsán National Monument.

The Coalition sent [a letter](#) to NPS Director Chuck Sams urging him to keep the child care center at Yosemite National Park open. The letter identifies the need for this service in order to support the workforce which operates in a rugged and remote area.

We provided detailed [comments](#) supporting visitor use management at Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie National Historical Park.

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.

- *Continued controversy for Air Tour Management Plans - National Parks Traveler published [an article](#) about the continued debate and lawsuits around Air Tour Management Plans. In December, the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation heard testimony about air tour restrictions. There are two pieces of legislation in the House created to weaken the creation and implementation of ATMPs. Meanwhile, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility and the National Parks Conservation Association have a pending suit that claims the NPS and Federal Aviation Administration improperly used "categorical exclusion" to avoid conducting environmental assessments. Source: *National Parks Traveler**
- *DOI Equity Action Plan - On February 14, the Department of the Interior released its Equity Action Plan, which seeks to address equitable access to public programs, build trust in law enforcement, promote equity in contracting processes, enhance equitable access to public lands, and incorporate environmental justice into policies and programs. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)*
- *GAO report on USA Staffing - The Government Accountability Office released [a report](#) that outlined concerns with the USA Staffing system, a privately contracted onboarding system for 140 federal agencies. The report found that the Office of Personnel Management had allowed agency agreements to expire and had not consistently updated management data. The National Park Service, specifically, was recommended to routinely solicit and analyze training feedback from human capital professionals and use that data to improve training resources. Source: [Government Executive](#), Government Accountability Office*
- *Climate change in Bay Area national parks - The NPS San Francisco Bay Area Inventory and Monitoring Network published [a storymap](#) called, "Vital Signs and Climate Change: Tracking the Pulse of San Francisco Bay Area National Park Ecosystems into an Uncertain Climate Future." Source: San Francisco Bay Area Network Inventory and Monitoring Program January 2024 newsletter*
- *SRS in Memphis - On February 14, the Department of the Interior announced that the NPS will soon launch a Special Resource Study to evaluate sites associated with eight lynchings in the greater Memphis, Tennessee, area between 1869 and 1940 for possible consideration as an NPS unit. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)*

- *Impacts of GAOA - High Country News* published [an article](#) outlining the accomplishments of the Great American Outdoors Act, including permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and infrastructure improvements through the Legacy Restoration Fund. The article includes maps of projects completed with both funds. Source: *High Country News*
- *NASA joins wildfire group* - On February 15, NASA announced that it is now an associate member of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group, allowing the interagency effort to leverage NASA's spatial data capabilities. Source: [PR Newswire](#)
- *"Safest and most dangerous national parks"* - The outdoor clothing retailer KÜHL published [an article](#), "U.S. National Park Safety Index" that analyzed national parks (in name, not all units of the National Park System) for total deaths, number of missing person cold cases, search and rescue missions, visitation, frequency of trail closures, issuance of alerts, number of park rangers, and proximity to hospitals. By their metrics, the safest parks were Gateway Arch, Petrified Forest, and Kobuk Valley National Parks. The most dangerous in their rankings were Grand Canyon National Park, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, and Isle Royale National Park. The article also pointed out that falls are the most common type of fatal incident, that men make up 74% of fatalities, and that deaths in national parks are still exceedingly rare. Meanwhile, Connecticut Trial Firm, a personal injury law firm, published its own analysis of the most "deadly" parks, taking into account only mortalities between July 2013 and July 2023, showing Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Yosemite National Park, and Grand Canyon National Park as the top three. Source: KÜHL, [Knox News](#) [Editor note: The NPS Mortality Data Report is available on the [NPS Freedom of Information -Frequently Requested Documents site.](#)]
- *Jim Crow era in the national parks* - *The Conversation* published [an article](#) by historian Thomas S. Bremer outlining early discriminatory practices in the national parks and the ways white supremacy underpinned thinking in early conservation efforts. The article juxtaposes those tenets with the personal experiences of W.E.B. Du Bois in the Grand Canyon in the early 20th century. Thomas has previously done historical research at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site. Source: *The Conversation*
- *"Thrilling History of Black Excellence in Our National Parks"* - *BlackPressUSA* published [an article](#) by this name, authored by Audrey Peterman, the 2022 recipient of the National Parks Conservation Association's Centennial Leadership Award. The article highlighted several examples of Black history preserved at national park sites across the country. Source: *BlackPressUSA*

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Adams National Historical Park* - On January 18, the Quincy, Massachusetts, planning board held a hearing for a proposed four-story condominium building directly across from the birthplaces of Presidents John Adams and John Quincy Adams, in the Adams Birthplace Historical District. Superintendent Marianne Peak read a letter at the planning board expressing concerns about development eroding the historic character of the site and construction coinciding with increased visitation during the city's quadricentennial (400th) and the nation's sesquicentennial (250th) birthday. The development was up for discussion during a zoning board of appeals hearing on February 6 (minutes unavailable as of publishing) and a second public hearing before the planning board will take place on March 20. Source: [The Patriot Ledger](#)
- *Amache National Historic Site* - On February 15, the Town of Granada, Colorado, donated a parcel of land at the site of the former Granada Relocation Center incarceration camp to the National Park Service to officially establish the park site. The park was designated in March 2022. The acquisition was done in partnership with the National Park Foundation, Town of Granada, Amache Alliance, and the Amache Preservation Society. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Cape Cod National Seashore* - *Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly* named attorney Bruce Bierhans as one of the top lawyers in the state in 2023 for his work representing Salvatore Del Deo in the highly publicized 2023 eviction from a Provincetown dune shack, which resulted in a settlement with the National Park Service. The Del Deo family end up with a five-year special use permit for use of the shack, with the opportunity to bid or negotiate an extension at that time. Source: [Cape Cod Times](#), [Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly](#)
- *Carter G. Woodson Home National Historic Site* - *The New York Times* published [an article](#) about the home of Carter G. Woodson, the "father of Black History month." The home served as the headquarters for the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History). The site is being restored and is slated to open to the public this fall. Source: *The New York Times*
- *Crater Lake National Park, Lassen Volcanic National Park, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Yosemite National Park* - On February 8, the Center for Biological Diversity submitted a petition to the Department of the Interior to grant the Sierra Nevada red fox protection under the Endangered Species Act. The species currently is protected under the California Endangered Species Act. A federal designation would protect them in Oregon and require both the NPS and U.S. Forest Service to more intentionally protect their habitat. The petition will next

go to review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Source: [Courthouse News Service](#)

- *Death Valley National Park* - The park announced that the storm-caused temporary lake at Badwater Basin, informally called Lake Manly, is currently deep enough to kayak, a rare opportunity. They estimate the lake is about six miles long, three miles wide, and one foot deep. It is expected to only be deep enough to kayak for a couple weeks. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)
- *Denali National Park and Preserve* - On February 1, Granite was awarded the \$112 million Federal Highway Administration contract for the construction manager scope of the Polychrome Area Improvements project. Source: [Financial Times](#)
- *Dry Tortugas National Park* - On March 11, the park began a dredging and moat wall repair project to protect historic Fort Jefferson. The counterscarp for Fort Jefferson was damaged by Hurricane Irma in 2017 and Hurricane Ian in 2022. Campground and beach closures will be in effect at different phases of the project. The entire project is expected to be complete in Fall 2024. Funding comes from Public Law 115-123 for national park units impacted by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. Source: [Dry Tortugas National Park](#)
- *Fort Point National Historic Site* - The park recently opened a new permanent exhibit, including Civil War-era artifacts and weaponry, archival and contemporary images, and interactive elements. The exhibit has been in development for "more than a decade." Source: [Golden Gate National Recreation Area](#)
- *Fort Scott National Historic Site* - In December 2023, the National Park Trust transferred a 0.75-acre parcel within the park boundaries to the NPS, including a building that will provide storage for maintenance equipment, allowing the park's historic "dragoon stables" to be interpreted. The National Park Trust purchased the property for \$160,000 in July 2021. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area* - On February 6, a federal appeals court heard arguments from lawyers representing Save the Colorado, Living River, and the Center for Biological Diversity, arguing that the Bureau of Reclamation and the National Park Service failed to adequately address the "bottom 30% of flow rate possibilities" into its 2016 management plan alternatives for Glen Canyon Dam water releases. The lawsuit began in 2019. A summary judgement was issued in December 2022 in favor of the federal agencies; the conservation groups appealed two months later, resulting in this hearing. A judgment is forthcoming. Source: [Courthouse News Service](#)
- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area* - The park's compendium was recently updated, including identifying the Lone Rock Play Area as a day use area and defining Off Road Vehicle travel rules based upon lake level elevations. As a result,

- a number of shoreline access areas are now closed to ORVs. Source: [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - The University of Arizona, University of New Mexico, and Arizona State University received a \$150,000 National Science Foundation grant to advance geoscience education among Indigenous Tribes in the Grand Canyon. Source: [The University of Arizona](#)
 - *Grand Teton National Park* - Cowboy State Daily published [an op-ed](#) by two former Wyoming governors, Mike Sullivan and Dave Freudenthal, arguing for the state to not sell the Kelly Parcel to developers nor attempt to trade the parcel for federal mineral rights, in favor of selling to the park with funding support from the Grand Teton National Park Foundation. [Editor note: For more on the Kelly Parcel, see [12/13/23](#) and [2/7/24](#) Coalition Reports.] Source: *Cowboy State Daily*
 - *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - On January 24, the Presidio was honored with its fifth consecutive Green Flag Award for its efforts ensuring "access to quality green space to enable healthy lifestyles and stronger communities." No other park in the U.S. has been given a Green Flag Award. Source: [The Presidio Trust](#)
 - *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - On February 9, the NPS announced the award of a 30-year lease to Headlands Center for the Arts for seven buildings and associated grounds at Fort Barry in the Marin Headlands. The lease started on January 1, 2024. The non-profit has provided arts-based programming in the Headlands for 42 years. Source: [Golden Gate National Recreation Area](#)
 - *Haleakalā National Park* - Timothy "Timmy" Bailey, the park aviation manager, was selected as the 2023 National Park Service Aviation Professional of the Year. Timmy was selected for managing a very complex aviation program, mentoring aviation staff across the country and across agencies, and for his leadership during the May 2023 Lahaina fires. Source: [National Park Service Aviation Program](#)
 - *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - The park has created [a new 10-minute film](#) about the Buffalo Soldiers that built a trail between the summit of Kīlauea and the summit of Mauna Loa in 1915. It is called "Forging a Path with a 12-Pound Hammer." Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)
 - *Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park* - On February 20, the park announced that the Chilkoot Trail on the U.S. side of the border will be open to mile 4.0 for the 2024 season due to successful repairs by park staff, including a new temporary bridge that spans the lower Taiya River at mile 1.5. The trail was severely damaged in floods in Fall 2022. Repairs will continue this year in hopes of allow the public to access the entire trail to the Canadian border. (The Canadian portion of the trail remains open, June 1 to September 13.) Source: [Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park](#)

- *Kobuk Valley National Park, Noatak National Preserve* - The *Anchorage Daily News* published [an article](#) about efforts to study the rusty discoloration of streams in northern Alaska. Jon O'Donnell, an NPS scientist, is quoted in the article. Research suggests that melting permafrost may be releasing iron, trace metals, and acid into streams. Source: *Anchorage Daily News*
- *Land and Water Conservation Fund* (an NPS-administered program) - On February 13, the Yellow Medicine County (MN) Board of Commissioners sent a letter to the Department of the Interior asking that the NPS "hold the Minnesota Legislature and the Department of Natural Resources accountable to the law or deny the transfer" of Upper Sioux Agency State Park to the Upper Sioux Community. The land originally was purchased by the State of Minnesota using a grant from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, so the State must provide replacement opportunities to make up for the sale. The park officially closed on February 16, and the State has yet to replace the "recreational value." The commissioners also have asked that local residents have a voice in determining those replacement opportunities. The State of Minnesota's Department of Natural Resources conducted a public engagement process in 2023, and those ideas "are being evaluated." The transfer of the park honors a long-standing request by the Upper Sioux Community. It is the site of starvation and mortality of Dakota people who were denied food promised by the U.S. government by treaty. The DNR stated, "Continuing to operate the land as a recreational use site is inconsistent with this profound history." Source: [West Central Tribune](#), [Minnesota Department of Natural Resources](#)
- *Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial* - The park soon will start a rehabilitation project on the carpentry shop and log barn. The work will be done by an NPS Maintenance Action Team from the Historic Preservation Training Center. Funding for the project comes from the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial](#)
- *National Historic Landmarks* (an NPS-administered program) - On February 8, the NPS announced it will do a study to determine the potential of the Manenggon concentration camp in Yona, Guam, to become a national historic landmark. Source: [The Guam Daily Post](#)
- *National Register of Historic Places* (an NPS-administered program) - On February 8, the NPS announced \$1.25 million for 21 projects in 19 states and the District of Columbia for the survey and nomination of sites and districts that currently are underrepresented in the National Register of Historic Places. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *New River Gorge National Park and Preserve* - On February 13, a resolution passed in the West Virginia House of Delegates to preserve historic buildings in Thurmond, a historic coal town in the park. This runs counter to the NPS' current plan to

demolish 21 of 35 deteriorating buildings at the site (recently open for public comment). A copy of the resolution has been forwarded to the Town of Thurmond and the NPS. Source: [MetroNews](#)

- *North Cascades National Park* - The Snohomish County (WA) Council approved a Memorandum of Understanding between the county's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the NPS, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to provide input on the agencies' draft Environmental Impact Statement for reintroducing grizzlies to the North Cascades ecosystem. A final Environmental Impact Statement is expected in early spring. Source: [HeraldNet](#)
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - *The New York Times* published [an article](#) about an incident observed by park wildlife biologists in January 2022, in which a male elephant seal nudged a pup struggling to stay afloat in the ocean back to shore. The observation was published in the journal *Marine Mammal Science* in January 2024. The incident is a rare case of potential altruism, particularly for a male elephant seal, which would typically be focused on feeding and mating. Source: *The New York Times*
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - The California Biodiversity Network is hosting a webinar, "Indigenous Co-Stewardship of Public Lands: Lessons for the Future," on February 21. The relationship between Point Reyes National Seashore and the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria will be discussed in the webinar. Source: [California Biodiversity Network](#)
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - On February 12, the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility asked the Office of Inspector General to audit leasing rates for dairy and cattle ranches within the park. They argue that the leases are well below U.S. Department of Agriculture standards for fair market value, are not covering the costs of managing the administration of the leases, and therefore are costing taxpayers "around \$3 million every year." Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Pullman National Historical Park* - On February 9, the NPS and Illinois Department of Natural Resources released the final Joint General Management Plan and Environmental Assessment for Pullman National Historical Park and Pullman State Historic Site. Source: [Pullman National Historical Park](#)
- *Reconstruction Era National Historic Network* (an NPS-administered program) - On February 15, the NPS added five entities in four states to the network. NPS Director Chuck Sams announced the additions during a visit to Reconstruction Era National Historical Park. There are now 107 listings spread across 28 states and Washington, D.C. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - The park has installed a transponder-based "fast pass" lane at Beaver Meadows Entrance and will soon be installing them at Fall

River Entrance and Grand Lake Entrance. Individuals may purchase a transponder, valid for one year (and renewable), with proof of a valid annual or lifetime park pass.

Source: [Rocky Mountain National Park](#)

- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - The park has announced changes to its Commercial Use Authorization program, including implementing a new online portal, defining an application window for all new and current CUA applicants, and changes to the fee structure. Source: [Rocky Mountain National Park](#)
- *Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park* - *The Washington Post* published [an article](#) featuring individuals who have lived 100 years and "their advice about everything." Betty Reid Soskin, 102, the record holder for the oldest ranger in the National Park Service (now retired from Rosie the Riveter), is featured with the advice to "keep asking questions." Source: *The Washington Post*
- *Scotts Bluff National Monument* - The park recently participated in the tenth annual Descriptathon, creating an audio-described version of the park brochure. The effort included park staff and volunteers from Scotts Bluff, Agate Fossil Beds National Monument, and Ford's Theatre, and members from both the American Council of the Blind and the Blinded Veterans Association. Source: [Scotts Bluff National Monument](#)
- *Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore* - On February 9, the park announced that it has opened up Commercial Use Authorization applications through March 8 for firewood vending at the Platte River Campground and D.H. Day Campground for 2024 and 2025. Source: [Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore](#)
- *Statue of Liberty National Monument* - On February 8, the park moved the security screening and ferry embarkation facility to a new location adjacent to The View Restaurant in The Battery in Lower Manhattan (NY). It is "less than 300 yards" from its previous location. The move will allow waterfront construction for New York City's Lower Manhattan Coastal Resiliency Project, which is expected to take about two years to complete. Source: [Statue of Liberty National Monument](#)
- *Vanishing Treasures Program* (an NPS-administered program) - *National Parks Traveler* recently published [an interview](#) with Ian Hough, program coordinator for the Vanishing Treasures Program. Source: National Parks Traveler
- *Yellowstone National Park* - New research in the journal *Ecological Monographs* brings into question a long-standing theory that the restoration of wolf populations led to the return of wetlands by keeping elk populations in check. The new research indicates that the restoration of large carnivores has not restored riparian plant communities as much as previously theorized. Data suggests the relationship between apex predators and ecological health is much more complex, including

water tables, competition between herbivores, human disturbance of waterways, and pressures outside park boundaries. Source: [Ecological Monographs](#)

- *Yellowstone National Park* - The week of February 5, the NPS and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service transferred 116 Yellowstone bison to the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in Poplar, Montana. The effort is part of the Bison Conservation Transfer Program, which is a collaborative effort between the NPS, Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, APHIS, the State of Montana, InterTribal Buffalo Council, Yellowstone Forever, Defenders of Wildlife, and the Greater Yellowstone Coalition. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - A new film, "Batso," is being produced about the 1970 first ascent of the route on El Capitan known as "The Wall of the Early Morning Light" (now known as the "Dawn Wall"). Warren "Batso" Harding will be played by Ethan Hawke and Dean Caldwell will be played by Daniel Radcliffe. Source: [Gear Junkie](#)
- *Zion National Park* - The park has begun liaising with local communities, elected officials, and other stakeholders about operational changes on the Zion-Mt. Carmel Highway to reduce collisions, overweight transits on road bridges, and lane-crossing due to vehicle size on narrow turns. Source: [Zion National Park](#)
- *Zion National Park* - *St. George News* published [an article](#) highlighting the efforts and challenges of responding to Search and Rescue incidents during wintertime. Law enforcement ranger Vance Swett and public information officer Jonathan Shafer are quoted in the article. Source: *St. George News*

Personnel Changes

- *Cumberland Island National Seashore, Fort Frederica National Monument* - Gia Wagner is currently serving as the acting superintendent at the two parks. Her stint started January 14 and will go through May. Her permanent job is as superintendent at Andersonville National Historic Site. Source: [Cumberland Island National Seashore](#)
- *George Washington Birthplace National Monument, Thomas Stone National Historic Site* - Kerry Gonzalez was chosen as the new chief of cultural resource management. Source: [George Washington Birthplace National Monument](#)

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

- David J. Essex, 87, passed away on February 14. David worked for the NPS for 28 years, including stints at Joshua Tree National Park, Hot Springs National Park, Wind Cave National Park, Ozark National Scenic Riverways, the Midwest Regional Office, and as the chief ranger at Rocky Mountain National Park. He retired from the NPS in 1991. Source: [Legacy/Allnutt Funeral Service - Hunter Chapel, Estes Park News](#)
- Bruce Penland Gregory, 94, passed away on January 9. Bruce was a landscape architect that "contributed significantly to the design and construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway." He also later served as the first chief of maintenance at Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area. Source: [Penland Family Funeral Home, Bruce Carroll](#)
- Alane Hall, 74, passed away on February 10. Alane worked for the NPS for a time, working to "restore portions of the Boston Navy Yard." Source: [The Wanderer](#)
- Gary Rankin, 72, passed away on January 31. Gary drove a snow coach in Yellowstone National Park for a time. Source: [Grand Forks Herald](#)
- Earl W. Raymond, 94, passed away on February 2. Earl volunteered with the NPS for many years, sharing "his knowledge and love of the stars." Source: [Bangor Daily News](#)
- Ana Steffen passed away on February 16. Ana was the cultural resources program manager and interdisciplinary scientist/communicator for Valles Caldera National Preserve. She worked at the park for over 20 years. The park published [a press release](#) honoring her work. Source: Valles Caldera National Preserve
- Alice Watts, 71, passed away on February 16. Alice both volunteered and worked at San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park from 1983 to present. Source: [Hyde Street Pier Chantey Sing Facebook group](#)
- David James Welch, 90, passed away on January 29. David worked in the Many Glacier area of Glacier National Park in the summers of 1959 and 1960. Source: [Legacy/The Bismarck Tribune](#)

In the News

- Bo Beck, a member of Zion National Park's Search and Rescue team from 1996 to 2012, is retiring in April after 15 years of running The Desert Rat, an outdoor gear store in St. George, Utah. Source: [St. George News](#)
- Ryan Thrush, the district ranger at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, is leaving the NPS after 30 years of service, to work as the helicopter manager with Hinsdale County (CO). The Montrose Daily Press published [an article](#) about his career, particularly his 20 years at Black Canyon of the Gunnison. Source: *The*

Montrose Daily Press

Open for Comment

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

- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - Public comment is [open through March 15](#) on proposed fee changes for camping and associated services. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)
- *Canaveral National Seashore* - Public comment is open through March 2 on a proposed increase and reservation changes to camping and the Turtle Watch Program. Comments can be submitted via email. Source: [Canaveral National Seashore](#)
- *Dearfield Special Resource Study* - Public comment is [open through February 23](#) on a special resource study of the historic Dearfield settlement in Weld County, Colorado, to identify whether it meets criteria to be recommended as a potential NPS unit. Source: [Greeley Tribune](#)
- *Death Valley National Park* - Public comment is [open through February 22](#) on a proposed plan to rehabilitate water and wastewater systems in Furnace Creek and Cow Creek. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Everglades National Park* - Public comment is [open through March 31](#) on a wilderness stewardship plan. [A storymap](#) for the plan is available. Source: [Everglades National Park](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - Public comment is [open through March 7](#) on a plan to remove and replace the wooden ballast bridge for the Grand Canyon Railway, which cross over Bright Angel Wash in Grand Canyon Village. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)
- *Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through March 10](#) on a plan to replace docks and fuel systems and rehabilitate parking areas at Seven Bays Marina. Source: [Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area](#)
- *Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park* - Public comment is [open through February 29](#) on a site plan for the King Family Home on Sunset Avenue in Atlanta, Georgia. Source: [FOX5 Atlanta](#)
- *Natchez Trace Parkway* - Public comment is [open through February 29](#) on a plan to construct an extension of the Chisa Foka Multi-Use Trail 2.5 miles to the Osburn Stand parking lot at Milepost 93.5, as originally envisioned in a 1995 plan. Source: [WJTV](#)
- *National Heritage Areas* (an NPS-administered program) - The Delta Protection

Commission has [opened public comment through March 6](#) on a Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta National Heritage Area Management Plan. Source: [Contra Costa News](#)

- *Thomas Edison National Historical Park* - Public comment is [open through March 1](#) on a proposal to increase fees for public electric charging stations. Source: [Thomas Edison National Historical Park](#)
- *Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument* - Public comment is [open through March 16](#) on a General Management Plan for the park. It will be the park's first GMP. Source: [Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - The NPS and Federal Highway Administration [have opened public comment through March 12](#) on a proposal to construct a new permanent North Entrance Road, which was damaged heavily in record floods in June 2022. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

Other Department of the Interior and Department of Agriculture News

- *\$157 million for ecosystem restoration* - On February 8, the Department of the Interior announced over \$157 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for 206 ecosystem restoration projects in 48 states, Washington, D.C., and U.S. territories. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$76 million for abandoned mines* - On February 15, the Department of the Interior announced \$75.8 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding to mitigate abandoned mines. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$18 million for native seed supply* - On February 7, the Bureau of Land Management announced \$18 million in Inflation Reduction Act funding to support the collecting, producing, and procuring of native seeds to safeguard genetic diversity through the newly launched National Seed Strategy Keystone Initiative. Source: [Bureau of Land Management](#)
- *\$10 million for BIA irrigation and utilities* - On February 16, the Department of the Interior announced \$10 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for Bureau of Indian Affairs-owned irrigation projects and power utilities. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *ESA symposium* - On February 12, the Department of the Interior hosted the "Endangered Species Act Symposium: Saving Life on Earth for the Next 50 Years." Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Klamath Basin MOU* - On February 14, the Department of the Interior signed a new Memorandum of Understanding with the Klamath Tribes, Yurok Tribe, Karuk Tribe,

and Klamath Water Users Association to work together on shared Klamath Basin restoration goals, including improving water and irrigation stability, strengthening ecosystem resilience, and protecting fish populations. The DOI also announced \$72 million in funding toward the Klamath Basin Drought Resilience Keystone Initiative. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

- *Changes to Alaska subsistence board* - On February 15, the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture announced a proposal to add three additional public members to the Federal Subsistence Board to be nominated by federally-recognized Tribal governments in Alaska. Public comment on the proposal will be open later this week. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Co-stewardship cultural burn* - *The Sun Gazette* published [an article](#) about a December 19 cultural burn on the Sequoia National Forest, a practice enabled by a 2022 co-stewardship agreement with the Tule River Tribe. The burn was completed in Long Meadow, with participation by U.S. Forest Service staff and members of several Tribes, including the Tule River Tribe and Tachi Yokuts Tribe. Source: *The Sun Gazette*
- *Utah turns down Bears Ears land swap* - On February 6, Utah Governor Spencer Cox signed legislation that the state is withdrawing from a nonbinding Memorandum of Understanding in March 2023 to swap 130,000 acres of Utah Trust Lands within Bears Ears National Monument for federal land holdings and mineral interests across the state. State representatives have said this is a result of the federal government pushing forward a (draft) management plan without considering the state's wishes. Source: [The Salt Lake Tribune](#)
- *Pinyon-juniper forest lawsuit against BLM* - The Western Watershed Project and Center for Biological Diversity have filed a lawsuit against the Bureau of Land Management's approval of a plan to harvest pinyon-juniper forests across 380,000 acres in eastern Nevada to be used as green methanol biofuel to generate electricity. Source: [Los Angeles Times](#)
- *Lawsuit against Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni* - An Arizona rancher has filed a lawsuit against the Biden Administration claiming abuse of the Antiquities Act for the designation of Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni - Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument. The plaintiff claims "severe regulatory burdens and the threat of criminal penalties for engaging in everyday contact on his ranch," much of which is located within the new monument. Source: [the Fence Post](#)
- *New appointees* - On February 9, the Department of the Interior announced three new appointees: Maryam Hassanein, Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Lands and Mineral Management; Manuokalani "Manu" Tupper, Advisor to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management; and John Watts, Senior Counselor to the Bureau of Reclamation. 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.

Senate Actions

February 8 – The Senate agreed to S. Res. 551, celebrating Black History Month.

House Actions

February 6 – The House passed H.R. 1727, amended, to amend the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Development Act to extend the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park Commission, by a 2/3 yeas-and-nays vote of 427 yeas to 2 nays.

February 6 – The Committee on Natural Resources held a markup on several bills, including H.R. 4984, to amend the District of Columbia Stadium Act of 1957 to provide for the transfer of administrative jurisdiction over the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus from the National Park Service to the Administrator of General Services and the leasing of the Campus to the District of Columbia for purposes which include commercial and residential development. H.R. 4984 was ordered reported, as amended.

February 14 – The Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries held a hearing on several bills, including H.R. 6784, to amend the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to provide for protective regulations when a species is listed as an endangered species. Testimony was heard from Representatives Duarte, Stauber, Soto, and Fischbach; Stephen Guertin, Deputy Director for Policy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior; and public witnesses.

February 15 – Read a letter from the Speaker wherein he designated the period from Thursday, February 15, 2024, through Tuesday, February 27, 2024, as a "district work period" under section 3(z) of House Resolution 5. The House will meet in pro forma sessions during this period where no formal business will be conducted.

February 15 – The Committee on Energy and Commerce: Subcommittee on Environment, Manufacturing, and Critical Materials held a hearing entitled "Safeguarding American Prosperity and People's Livelihoods: Legislation to Modernize Air Quality Standards." Testimony was heard from John Eunice, Deputy Director, Environmental Protection Division, Department of Natural Resources, Georgia; and public witnesses.

February 15 – The Committee on the Judiciary held a markup on several bills, including H.R. 7316, to make improvements in the enactment of title 54, United States Code, into a positive law title and to correct related technical errors (Title 54 involves laws related to the National Park Service and its programs). H.R. 7316 was ordered reported, without

amendment.

Incidents

Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.

Cape Hatteras National Seashore

Fatal vehicle crash

On February 13, a 61-year-old and a passenger were driving north on Highway 12 on Ocracoke Island, just north of the park's "pony pens." The individuals were reportedly trying to catch a soon-departing ferry. The car swerved off the road and crashed into a sand dune. The driver passed away in the crash and the passenger sustained minor injuries. No other cars were involved. Source: [WRAL](#)

Crater Lake National Park

Concession termination

The NPS has provided notice to Crater Lake Hospitality, a subsidiary of Aramark, that it intends to terminate their concession contract unless they show "cause as to why the NPS should not do so." The press release stated that "termination would be an extremely rare action." Recent annual reviews by the NPS have shown that the concession has had "poor facility upkeep, failure to complete maintenance projects and a lack of staff training," as well as staff reports of "sexual assault and harassment, and subpar living and working conditions." Aramark has stated publicly that "the challenges at Crater Lake National Park are not indicative of our overall business operations." The current contract was set to expire in 2030. Source: [The Seattle Times](#), [National Park Service Regions 8, 9, 10, and 12 \(Pacific West Region\)](#)

Death Valley National Park

Flash flooding

On February 6, heavy rain caused flash flooding and debris across many roads. CA-190 and Badwater Road were reopened the following day. Many side roads are still closed. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)

Golden Gate National Recreation Area

Child rescued from cliff

On February 10, a 12-year-old was climbing on a bluff on Fort Funston when they got stuck. When firefighters arrived on scene, they were unable to see the individual from the top. They requested a California Highway Patrol helicopter, which flew down the cliff and found the individual about halfway down, still more than 100 feet off the ground. The helicopter picked up a firefighter and flew them close enough to rescue the individual off the cliff and transport them to the top. Paramedics examined the individual and did not find any injuries. Source: [San Francisco Chronicle](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Possible arson

On February 6, a fire was found and extinguished off Laurel Creek Road near the Crib Gap Trail. It is under investigation as a possible arson fire. The NPS is looking for any information the public can provide. Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)

Indiana Dunes National Park

Uptick in illegal bicycling

The park made a public announcement about a recent uptick in bicyclists riding on hiking trails where bikes are prohibited. They have asked the public to visit the biking page on their website to determine which trails are bike-friendly. Source: [WIMS](#)

Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area

Missing individual found deceased

On February 9, a 51-year-old went missing on Lake Roosevelt near Bradbury boat launch. The empty boat was found the following morning, south of the boat launch. A search was conducted by the NPS and Steven's County (WA) Sheriff's Office. On February 16, the NPS announced that the individual's body was found in the lake. Source: [KREM](#), [KXLY](#), [The Spokesman-Review](#)

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore

High temperatures

On February 8 the park closed Sand Point to all ice climbing activity due to above average temperatures that created "considerable ice melt at popular ice climbing locations and severe snowmelt." Increased foot traffic has also deteriorated trail conditions and the potential for impacts on park resources. The closure will continue until conditions change. Source: [Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore](#)

Yosemite National Park

Rockfall

On February 6, the park announced that a rockfall has closed the trail between Happy Isles and the Vernal Fall footbridge. A detour is available along the stock trail. A reopening date was not immediately available. Source: [The Fresno Bee](#)

Yosemite National Park

Theft indictment

On February 15, a federal grand jury returned an indictment for a 28-year-old for theft of personal property, unauthorized use of a motor vehicle, and fleeing or eluding a police

officer, in relation to a December 2022 incident. The individual is accused of stealing a Yosemite employee's vehicle after the employee pulled over to the side of the road to remove a bicycle from the roadway. The suspect then engaged in a high-speed chase, eventually driving against traffic on the one-lane bridge at the Ferguson Slide, colliding head on with another vehicle. The suspect was able to continue driving, eventually driving off a cliff and tumbling approximately 200 feet to the bottom of the canyon. Source:

[United States Attorney's Office: Eastern District of California](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Glacier National Park* - The Flathead Conservation District, in a recent federal court filing, argued that the location of a private parcel in Glacier National Park did not preempt enforcement of Montana streambed protection laws. The district is being sued by a couple who argues they overstepped their jurisdictional authority by ordering the demolition of their partially completed home in the West Glacier area for failing to comply with the streambed laws (see [3/22/23](#), [11/1/23](#), [11/29/23 Coalition Reports](#)). They claim that neither the county nor the park required any permits to begin construction on the property. Lawsuits are ongoing in both state and federal court. Source: [Flathead Beacon](#)
- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area* - On February 9, the NPS announced that they have completed a review of the Bullfrog Marina fire that occurred on October 26, 2023 (see [11/1/23 Coalition Report](#)). The investigation was able to identify the point of origin (undisclosed). The source of the fire was undetermined and was deemed accidental in nature. Source: [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#)
- *Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore* - On February 7, a 63-year-old was convicted of one count of tampering and one count of vandalism for diverting the Platte River inside the park in August 2022 (see [9/7/22](#), [6/7/23](#), and [7/5/23 Coalition Reports](#)). The individual used a shovel to dig rocks and sediment from the river basin and stacked large rocks in a dam to divert the river flow toward a newly-created channel leading to Lake Michigan. It widened to 200 feet within a couple of days and allowed large boats unauthorized access to Platte Bay. The individual was said to have a "policy dispute" with the NPS and "took matters into his own hands," according to the U.S. Attorney. Source: [Michigan Advance](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - On February 13, a 39-year-old well-known in the rock climbing community was found guilty in federal court on three charges of sexual assault relating to an incident in 2016 (see [9/7/22 Coalition Report](#)). The individual met up with another climber via *Facebook*, then assaulted them three times over a period of several days and choked them almost to death. Testimony was also heard by other climbers who said they were also previously assaulted and stalked by the individual. Over a 14-year period, nine protection orders or restraining orders were filed against the individual. The individual will be sentenced on May 21. Source: [Outside](#)

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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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