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## **The Coalition Report**

### **Wednesday, June 12, 2024**

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#### **Coalition Actions**

The Coalition published [a press release](#) condemning the Bureau of Land Management's approval of the Lava Ridge wind farm, in close proximity to Minidoka National Historic Site (see more in "Around the Parks" below).

The Coalition provided [comments](#) on the Point Reyes National Seashore draft Tomales Point Area Plan/Environmental Assessment. Among other things, the letter supports Alternative B and makes a series of detailed recommendations, including establishing a visitor capacity and conducting a wilderness character assessment. The Coalition also joined with forty organizations in [a letter](#) expressing support for Alternative B of the Tomales Point Area Plan/Environmental Assessment.

We joined with numerous organizations in [a letter](#) to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure: Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment detailing concerns regarding pollution and hazards left at Cape Hatteras National Seashore by the Department of Defense. It requests the Subcommittee conduct oversight and ensure the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has the necessary authority to remediate the Seashore.

On behalf of the Coalition and Vet Voice Foundation, three members signed [a letter](#) to President Joe Biden urging designation of three national monuments in California: Chuckwalla, Kw'tsán, and Sáttítla Medicine Lake Highlands.

## 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.*

- *4 new national recreation trails* - On June 1, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland announced the designation of four new national recreation trails in four states, consisting of 33.5 miles. They are the Banks-Vernonia State Trail, a rail-to-trail route in Oregon; the Comal River Water Trail, "one of the best tubing rivers in Texas"; the Hell's Revenge Trail, a popular off-highway vehicle trail near Moab, Utah; and the Sweet Spring Turnpike Trail, a multiuse trail along a historic stage road in West Virginia. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *NPS Excellence in Interpretation and Education Awards* - The NPS announced its regional "[Excellence in Interpretation Awards](#)" (formerly known as the "Freeman Tilden Awards for Excellence in Interpretation") and "[Excellence in Education Awards](#)." The national award winners will be celebrated in August. Source: National Park Service Office of Communications
- *\$15 million for climate resilience* - On June 10, the NPS announced over \$15 million in Inflation Reduction Act funds for various climate change resilience projects across park units, such as avian malaria abatement, sagebrush restoration, coastal marsh conservation, and grassland restoration (see next bullet). Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Large scale grassland restoration* - The NPS is embarking on a large eastern grassland restoration project across many units. The project is being funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Ada Limón park tour* - On June 14, U.S. Poet Laureate Ada Limón will perform at Cape Cod National Seashore, the first of seven performances at NPS units under the initiative, "You are Here: Poetry in Parks." Additionally, at each event, there will be the installation of a public art picnic table featuring other American poets, as well as community outreach events "that nurture connections with the natural world." The project is a partnership between the NPS, Library of Congress, and Poetry Society of America. Source: [Cape Cod National Seashore](#)
- *NPS supports mental health* - Sierra published [an article](#) about the mental health challenges of working for the NPS and the agency's efforts to support wellness and resiliency. Source: *Sierra*
- *Volunteers archive Revolutionary War pension docs* - The NPS and the National Archives are working with a team of "citizen archivist" volunteers to scan and digitize about 83,000 handwritten military pension applications from Revolutionary

War veterans. The two agencies are trying to digitize as many as possible before the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 2026. Many of the documents are rich narratives of relationships, events, and geography. Source: [USA Today](#)

### **Around the Parks**

*Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.*

- *Bandelier National Monument* - On May 30, the park officially reopened the Tsankawi Unit, following a 14-month closure to improve traffic flow at a nearby junction and to re-route the Tsankawi Loop Trail. Source: [Bandelier National Monument](#)
- *Bering Land Bridge National Preserve* - KNOM published [an article](#) about a recent two-day workshop with the NPS and Tribal representatives to guide a renovation of the park's visitor center. Construction will begin this summer and is expected to be complete in Summer 2025. Source: *KNOM*
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - The parkway will soon begin improvements to roads and road-related infrastructure in many places along the parkway. Delays and detours will be in place. Funding for the projects comes from the Federal Highway Administration and the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway \(6/6, 6/7\)](#)
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - On June 11, the parkway announced the opening of proposals for 10-year concession contracts at Peaks of Otter (lodging, food and beverage, retail) and Mabry Mill (food and beverage, retail). Intents of Notice to Propose are due August 5 and proposals are due on August 23. The new contracts will begin on January 1, 2025. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)
- *Cape Lookout National Seashore* - The NPS, in collaboration with the Army Corps of Engineers and Carteret County (NC), recently completed a \$6.9 million dredging and beach nourishment project to improve access to Barden Inlet and the Cape Lookout Bight. Source: [CoastalReview.org](#)
- *Catoctin Mountain Park* - The park has completed a significant upgrade of its campgrounds and cabin camps, including new utilities, new swimming pools, renovation of several buildings, and new cots and mattresses. Source: [Catoctin Mountain Park](#)
- *Chickasaw National Recreation Area* - The park is seeking letters of intent for applicants to cut and remove 120 acres of hay this month from three former agricultural fields. Source: [Chickasaw National Recreation Area](#)
- *Cuyahoga Valley National Park* - On June 6, the park signed an international Sister

- Park agreement with Dartmoor National Park in the United Kingdom. The parks will share best practices, particularly as they relate to managing open spaces near metropolitan areas and working with local communities on environmental restoration projects. Source: [Cuyahoga Valley National Park](#)
- *Death Valley National Park* - The park has received \$62 million in Great American Outdoors Act funding to rehabilitate the water and wastewater systems at Furnace Creek and Cow Creek. A final contract award is pending. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)
  - *Devils Postpile National Monument* - A project to reconstruct the Reds Meadow Road recently started. The road into Devils Postpile, which is on the Inyo National Forest, will remain closed this summer Monday through Thursday, and open Friday through Sunday, as well as holidays. Vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian access is prohibited when the road is closed. Source: [Devils Postpile National Monument](#)
  - *Dry Tortugas National Park* - On June 4, the park posted a photo to its Facebook page that documents the appearance of a yellow buoy from the park in the community of Perros-Guirec in Brittany, France. The boundary marker had broken loose and traveled on ocean currents for 4,000 miles. The residents adopted it and installed it at a tourist attraction known as "Port Miniature Perros Guirec," which features electric boats. Source: Dry Tortugas National Park Facebook page ([6/4](#), [6/6](#))
  - *Fire Island National Seashore* - The park recently debuted new educational exhibits about marine debris, including waysides, an interactive microplastics investigation station, a junior ranger activity sheet, and an osprey sculpture made from locally collected debris. This project was supported through a partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Marine Debris Program. Source: [Fire Island National Seashore](#)
  - *Gauley River National Recreation Area, New River Gorge National Park and Preserve* - New River Gorge unveiled a new bike repair station at the trailheads of the Arrowhead and Rend Trail. It was purchased by the Friends of New River Gorge National Park and Preserve with support from the Enel North America. The friends group also recently installed raft blowers for private boaters at the Cunard River Access on the New River and the Tailwaters River Access at Gauley River NRA, as well as several fishing line disposal areas. Additional bike repair stations are currently being planned. Source: [New River Gorge National Park and Preserve](#)
  - *Grand Teton National Park* - The park released "[Grand Glimpse: 2024 State of the Park](#)," a report outlining recent accomplishments by park staff, volunteers, and partners. Source: [Grand Teton National Park](#)
  - *Haleakalā National Park* - On June 5, the Maui County Council voted 9-0 to pass

- a resolution opposing a proposed project by the U.S. Space Force and Air Force to build new telescopes on the summit of Haleakalā volcano. The resolution asks the NPS, Federal Aviation Administration, and Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources to deny the project permits. Source: [Federal Times](#)
- *Independence National Historical Park* - The *Philadelphia Inquirer* published [an article](#) about a newly-formed group, United for Independence, that is working to bolster funding and attention for the park and its historic resources. The group is made up of over 30 "institutions, museums, and sites." The park has a \$199 million backlog of deferred maintenance and many closed buildings, including the Declaration House, the location where the Declaration of Independence was written. Source: *Philadelphia Inquirer*
  - *Keweenaw National Historical Park* - On June 6, the Keweenaw National Historical Park Advisory Commission announced \$117,082 for 13 grants awarded through the Keweenaw Heritage Grant program. Source: [Keweenaw National Historical Park](#)
  - *Land and Water Conservation Fund State and Local Grant Funding* (an NPS-administered program) - On June 6, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) released its review of an application by the City of Pawtucket to convert portions of three properties from recreation use to other purposes. Those three properties used federal funding from the LWCF, and, therefore, are required to maintain them for recreational use in perpetuity unless an official conversion is approved. The DEM has recommended approval of conversion of McCoy Stadium and Dunnell Park/Hank Soar Field, while not recommending approval of the partial conversion of the South Woodlawn/Morley Field site due to extensive public comments citing environmental justice concerns. Public comment was not required, but the city felt it important to hear community voices on the matter. The NPS will have the final say on the conversion process. Source: [State of Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management](#)
  - *Manassas National Battlefield Park* - On June 15, Juneteenth, the park will host a dedication ceremony of the Andrew Redman Blacksmith Shop, opening it to the public for the first time. Source: [Manassas National Battlefield Park](#)
  - *Minidoka National Historic Site* - On June 6, the Bureau of Land Management issued a Final Environmental Impact Statement, advancing the Lava Ridge Wind Project, located just outside the park and in the historic footprint of the Minidoka incarceration camp. In its public comments on the plan, the park stated that the project would "fundamentally change the psychological and physical feelings of remoteness and isolation one experiences when visiting Minidoka NHS...visitors would no longer experience the feeling of a rural, undeveloped landscape recalling what Minidoka was like during World War II." Source: [National Parks Conservation Association](#)

- *Mount Rainier National Park* - On May 24, the park reopened Stevens Canyon Road after a two-year rehabilitation project. The \$43 million project was completed with funding from the Great American Outdoors Act. Rehabilitation included repair of historic Civilian Conservation Corps-era stone masonry features over nine miles of roadway. Source: [Mount Rainier National Park](#)
- *Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park* - The park has received a \$2 million "federal grant" for a new pedestrian footbridge to view Great Falls and to restore the Ivanhoe Wheelhouse. Source: [northjersey.com](#)
- *Petrified Forest National Park* - 12News published [an article](#) about the Painted Desert Inn and its history in celebration of its 100-year anniversary. The park's interpretation and education program manager, Sarah Herve, is quoted in the article. Source: 12News
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - The NPS signed a Finding of No Significant Impact for a Day Use Visitor Access Plan for the park, including two timed entry reservation systems - one for Bear Lake Road Corridor and one for the rest of the park. This is patterned on the pilot program the park has utilized the last three summers. Source: [Rocky Mountain National Park](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - *The Denver Post* published [a profile](#) of Gary Ingram, superintendent of Rocky Mountain since August 2023. Gary grew up in Yosemite and has worked for the NPS since 1993. The article touches on his career, as well as the challenges and opportunities he sees at the park. *The Denver Post* later posted [another article](#) with Gary's "three favorite places" in the park. Source: *The Denver Post*
- *Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve* - From May 13 through June 13, the park is collaborating with the University of North Florida to conduct archaeological surveys on shell middens at the park. Source: [University of North Florida Newsroom](#)
- *Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument* - The park will now partner with the Western National Parks Association as their cooperating association. It is the 72nd NPS unit to partner with WNPA since 1938. Source: [PR Newswire](#)
- *Yosemite National Park, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - Researchers from the University of California, Merced, have published new papers showing that there is not always alignment between executed research and the "the apparent demand for knowledge" in national parks/ The research was conducted utilizing records from the NPS Research Permit and Reporting System, and in partnership with Yosemite, Sequoia, and Kings Canyon. Source: [Sierra Sun Times](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - On June 6, the NPS released a Final Environmental Impact Statement for a Bison Management Plan at the park. The preferred

alternative would keep the bison herd within a population range of 3,500 to 6,000 animals with an "emphasis" on using the Bison Conservation Transfer Program to restore bison to Tribal lands and relying on public hunting outside the park to regulate numbers. The FEIS has been published in the Federal Register to initiate a 30-day wait-period. At the end of the wait-period, the NPS will sign and publish a Record of Decision. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

- *Yellowstone National Park* - The Yellowstone Heritage and Research Center in Gardiner, Montana, is hosting an exhibit this summer highlighting women's contributions to the park. The *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* highlighted several of those stories, including the historical controversy over some of Yellowstone's early women rangers. Source: [Bozeman Daily Chronicle](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - On June 4, a photographer captured images of a rare white bison calf in Lamar Valley, just after it was born. Source: [KTVQ](#)
- *Zion National Park* - On May 30, the park announced a new plan to improve traffic and safety issues on the Zion-Mt. Carmel Highway. Starting in mid-2026, large vehicles will be rerouted to alternate routes. Source: [Zion National Park](#)

### **Personnel Changes**

- *Fire and Aviation Management* - Stephanie "Steph" Auten was selected as the budget analyst for the NPS Division of Fire and Aviation. Steph has 14 years of NPS experience, most recently as the budget analyst for the Branch of Wildland Fire. Source: [National Park Service Fire and Aviation Management](#)

### **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**

- Charles "Charlie" Edward Castro, 89, passed away on May 24. Charlie was born in Yosemite Valley and worked for both Yosemite National Park and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. He supervised Sequoia and Kings Canyon's forestry crew from 1964 until his retirement in 1995. Charlie is well-known for his efforts climbing and extinguishing a fire in the California Tree, a giant sequoia, as well as his installation of a "research elevator" in a giant sequoia for entomologists from San Jose State University. Source: [Visalia Times Delta](#)
- Lois Lema, 55, passed away on May 5. Lois worked for the National Park Service for a number of years, including at Statue of Liberty National Monument, Fire Island National Seashore, Gateway National Recreation Area, and Sleeping Bear Dunes

National Lakeshore. She retired from the NPS in 2012. Source: NPS Employees Facebook page, Steve Pittleman, [blurb.com](#)

- Michael "Mike" Warren Pratt, 77, passed away on May 25. Mike worked as a ranger, paramedic, and climbing ranger in Rocky Mountain National Park for many years. After retirement, he continued to volunteer in the park. Source: [Estes Park News](#)
- Randy Curtis Starling, 78, passed away on May 26. Randy worked as a ranger at Great Smoky Mountains for a time. Source: [The Mountain Press](#)
- James "Jim" Ogden Stiles, Jr., 77, passed away on March 11. Jim worked as a seasonal ranger at Arches National Park for a time, and later founded the newspaper *The Canyon Country Zephyr*, which published many stories related to the park and the American West, writ large. Source: [The Canyon Country Zephyr](#)
- Marylyn Olivia (Woodward) Tobin, 90, passed away on June 1. Marilyn worked for the NPS "in the communication center and later for the Denver Service Center in Yellowstone." Marilyn was married to Chuck Tobin, who also worked for the NPS for many years, and they lived together with their family in Lassen Volcanic National Park, Death Valley National Park, and Yellowstone National Park. Source: [KZBK](#)
- Jerald "Jerry" Alfred Vance, 67, passed away on May 22. Jerry worked at Theodore Roosevelt National Park for a time. Source: [The Dickinson Press](#)
- David Richard "Rick" Whitesides, 80, passed away on May 28. Rick worked for the NPS for a period of time. Source: [Standard-Examiner](#)
- Barbara Jane Marie (Foran) Willan, 71, passed away on May 25. Barbara spent a season working in Yellowstone National Park after high school. Source: [Legacy](#)

### **Retired**

- Joe Mazur announced that he will soon retire, after seven years as the CEO of the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad. Source: [Times-Gazette](#)
- The *Rappahannock News* published [an article](#) about Pat Kenney's recent tenure as the superintendent at Shenandoah National Park. Pat is newly retired. Source: *Rappahannock News*

### **Open for Comment**

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

- *Anacostia Park* - Public comment [will be open from June 25 through August 30](#) on revised design concepts for the park, including better transportation access, flood



- resilience, and visitor amenities. Source: [Anacostia Park](#)
- *Chiricahua National Monument* - Public comment is [open through June 30](#) on a plan to increase fees at Bonita Canyon Campground. Source: [Chiricahua National Monument](#)
  - *Christiansted National Historic Site* - Public comment is open through July 6 on the reimplementation of a daily parking fee at the visitor parking lot. Parking fees were collected from "the early 2000s to 2010," then paused after a restructure of staffing. After a review at the NPS Regional level in 2022, it was found that the cost of maintenance and inflation made it difficult to maintain the parking lot without a fee. The new operation would include an automated fee machine. Comments can be made via email. Source: [Christiansted National Historic Site](#)
  - *Crater Lake National Park* - Public comment is [open through June 14](#) on a Draft Accessibility Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. Source: [Crater Lake National Park](#)
  - *Death Valley National Park* - The NPS and Federal Highway Administration have opened public comment [through June 23](#) on a proposal to replace the boardwalk, road, vault toilet, and parking lot at Salt Creek. The boardwalk and vault toilet were destroyed in a flashflood in August 2022, then the parking lot and road were damaged by Hurricane Hilary in 2023. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)
  - *Everglades National Park* - Public comment is [open through July 5](#) on a project to rehabilitate parkwide water and wastewater systems, including the proposed demolition of two small utility buildings that are historic resources near the Shark Valley Observation Tower. Source: [Everglades National Park](#)
  - *Fire Island National Seashore* - Public comment is [open through May 28](#) on an Off Road Vehicle Management plan. Source: [Fire Island National Seashore](#)
  - *Haleakalā National Park* - Public comment is [open through June 22](#) on a proposed increase on frontcountry and backcountry campgrounds. Source: [Haleakalā National Park](#)
  - *Jewel Cave National Park* - Public comment is [open through July 7](#) on a Draft Accessibility Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. Source: [Jewel Cave National Park](#)
  - *Joshua Tree National Park* - Public comment is [open through June 30](#) on a plan to increase fees for camping and Key's Ranch tours. Source: [Joshua Tree National Park](#)
  - *Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park* - Public comment is [open through July 12](#) on a proposal to redesign use patterns on Kennesaw Mountain Drive,

including expanded shuttle bus operations, specified hours for bicycle use, and a wide pedestrian lane. Source: [Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park](#)

- *Lake Clark National Park and Preserve* - Public comment is [open through June 24](#) on a resource analysis for two proposed easements that would provide access to a mineral prospect known as Johnson Tract. Source: [Lake Clark National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Lassen Volcanic National Park* - Public comment is [open through July 1](#) on a Manzanita Lake Design Concept Plan for improving facilities and infrastructure. Source: [Lassen Volcanic National Park](#)
- *Reconstruction Era National Historical Park* - Public comment is [open through June 30](#) on the park's first General Management Plan. Source: [Reconstruction Era National Historical Park](#)
- *Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway* - Public comment is [open through July 16](#) on a proposed site plan for the Fairy Falls Day Use Area. Source: [Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway](#)
- *Shiloh National Military Park* - Public comment is [open through July 4](#) on a Development Concept Plan for the management of new lands added to the park since 2000. Source: [Shiloh National Military Park](#)
- *Voyageurs National Park* - Public comment is [open through June 28](#) on a proposed Frozen Lake Use Plan. Source: [Voyageurs National Park](#)

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

- *Molok Luyuk co-stewardship* - The Bureau of Land Management, the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, and the Kletsel Dehe Wintun Nation signed a co-stewardship agreement to manage Molok Luyuk, consisting of 20,000 acres of Wintun Nation ancestral lands in Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument. In May, the monument was expanded to include Molok Luyuk. Source: [Sierra Sun Times](#)
- *Trump claims he will cut environmental agencies* - In an interview on June 2, former President Donald Trump claimed that, if re-elected, he would slash several environmental agencies that have blocked economic activity, including the Department of the Interior and other "environmental agencies." Most federal agencies, including the Interior Department and Environmental Protection Agency, are Congressionally-ratified, and thus outside the authority of the President. Source: [E&E News](#)
- *Haaland at Maine Dems convention* - On June 1, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland gave the keynote address at the Maine Democratic Party convention.

Source: [Maine Morning Star](#)

### **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 and House Actions**

**May 28 and May 31** – The Senate and House of Representatives met in pro forma sessions as they were in recess for the Memorial Day holidays.

**June 3-7** – Neither the Senate or House conducted business affecting the NPS this week and were both in pro forma sessions on Friday, June 7.

### **Incidents**

*Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.*

#### **Badlands National Park**

##### **Plague confirmed**

On May 31, test results confirmed plague as the cause of a prairie dog die-off in the park, Buffalo Gap National Grassland, and the greater Conata-Badlands ecosystem in South Dakota. The disease has not been detected in Conata Basin since 2009, when it killed over 80% of the remaining black-footed ferrets, one of the most endangered mammals in the world. The risk to humans is low, though "approximately seven human cases occur every year, primarily in the southwestern U.S. and California." Source: [Badlands National Park](#)

#### **Badlands National Park, Mount Rushmore National Memorial**

##### **Air tour lawsuit**

On June 7, a federal court of appeals denied a request to suspend new air tour restrictions in the two parks while a lawsuit against the NPS, Department of the Interior, and Federal Aviation Administration proceeds through the courts. [Editor note: *The Coalition to Protect America's National Parks is mentioned in the article for its role as an intervenor in the case.*] Source: [South Dakota Searchlight](#)

#### **Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area**

##### **Storm**

On May 26, a storm dropped almost two inches of rain and produced "dangerously high winds," leaving extensive damage across several park trails and roads. Many visitors were trapped overnight at the Charit Creek Lodge. Park staff were able to work "tirelessly, yet

safely," to clear roads so visitors could leave the following day. As of May 29, ten park trails and three roads remained closed while park staff mitigate dangers. Source: Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area ([5/28](#), [5/29](#))

## **Blue Ridge Parkway**

### **Shooting**

On May 29, the park was notified of a shooting near milepost 398. A single shooting victim, age 19, was transported to Mission Hospital. They were said to be in critical condition. Early investigation indicates this was "a targeted crime and there is no threat to the public." The parkway was temporarily closed between mileposts 393.6 and 405. The road reopened later that day. The investigation is ongoing and is led by the NPS Investigative Services Branch with support from parkway staff and the Buncombe County Sheriff's Office. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#), [WYFF](#)

## **Bryce Canyon National Park**

### **Ranger dies while on duty**

On June 7 around 11:30 PM, NPS ranger Tom Lorig, 78, fell while directing a visitor to a shuttle bus after programming in the park's annual Astronomy Festival. He struck his head on a rock and went unresponsive. A visitor notified a nearby law enforcement ranger, and several staff responded quickly to provide care. They were unsuccessful at resuscitation. Tom worked for over 10 years as a permanent, seasonal, and volunteer park ranger at 14 NPS sites. Source: [St. George News](#)

## **Cape Hatteras National Seashore**

### **House collapse**

On May 28, an unoccupied house collapsed in Rodanthe, North Carolina, onto the beach. A one-mile of section of beach was closed from Sea Haven Drive to South Shore Drive, and visitors were "urged" to avoid beaches north of Sea Haven Drive into the southern portion of Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge because of debris drift. The property owner hired a debris removal contractor, and NPS staff and volunteers helped remove much of the debris. On May 30, the park reopened 70% of the closure area, with the area from S. Holiday Boulevard to the north end of Ocean Drive in Rodanthe still closed. Visitors are warned to be cautious of debris that may continue to wash ashore. It is the sixth house to collapse at Cape Hatteras over the last four years. Source: Cape Hatteras National Seashore ([5/28](#), [5/30](#))

## **Carlsbad Caverns National Park**

### **Whitenose syndrome**

In early May, swabs collected from bats in the Left Hand Tunnel area of Carlsbad Caverns, near the Rattlesnake Springs day use area, tested positive for *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*, the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome. The park is increasing efforts

to mitigate the spread to other areas of the park, including the decontamination of caving and research equipment, as well as visitor footwear, before and after entry. Source:

[Carlsbad Caverns National Park](#)

### **Death Valley National Park**

#### **Vehicle fatality of staff member**

On May 26, a 28-year-old NPS staff member, Rigoberto "RJ" Avina, died in a single-vehicle accident on CA-190. He was not on duty at the time of the accident. He had worked for park's maintenance division since September 2021. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)

### **Denali National Park and Preserve**

#### **Frostbite evacuations**

Leading up to May 28, NPS mountaineering rangers treated two individuals for frostbite injuries at the medical tent at the 14,200-foot camp for multiple days. On the 28th, the NPS helicopter was able to reach camp and evacuate the two individuals to Talkeetna. The individual with more severe injuries was transferred to a LifeMed ambulance for advanced care. Source: [Denali National Park and Preserve](#)

### **Denali National Park and Preserve**

#### **Climbing rescue with one fatality**

On May 28 at 1 AM, a team of three mountaineers, ages 36, 47, and 48, sent an emergency message via satellite that indicated they were hypothermic and unable to descend from their location on the 20,310-foot summit of Denali. Rangers communicated with them until about 3:30 AM, at which point the team stated their plan to descend to "the Football Field," a flat area at 19,600 feet. After that transmission, the rangers did not hear back from the group and noted that the location of the satellite device did not change. Later that morning, variable weather prevented the park's helicopter from flying, so the park requested assistance from the Alaska Rescue Coordination Center. The Alaska Air National Guard launched a helicopter and spotted two of the three climbers between 19,000 and 20,000 feet shortly before noon.

The third climber was located by a climbing guide near Zebra Rocks at 18,600 feet. They were suffering from severe frostbite and hypothermia. The guide and their party helped get the individual to the 17,200-foot camp and transferred care to an NPS ground team that had climbed from the 14,200-foot camp. Difficult conditions prevented safe access by helicopter throughout the day, but at 10:15 PM, the climber at 17,200-foot camp was extracted by a park helicopter, flown to Talkeetna, then transferred to a LifeMed helicopter.

A private guide was able to divert "significant time" to assist and provide care for the other two individuals at the Football Field. The individuals were non-ambulatory, and the

guide returned to the 17,200-foot camp that evening for his safety and the safety of his team. The two distressed individuals bivvied in a snow cave. Clouds and high winds prevented reaching the two individuals by ground or air on May 29 and 30. The night of May 30, the park helicopter was able to drop a duffle bag of survival gear near the snow cave. One of the climbers was able to wave at the helicopter, but high winds prevented rescue.

The morning of May 31, the park helicopter was able to complete a short-haul line rescue for one of the individuals. They reported that the other individual had passed away two days prior. The surviving patient was flown to the 7,200-foot Kahiltna Basecamp, evacuated to the Talkeetna State Airport, then transferred to a LifeMed air ambulance for advanced care. That evening, the deceased individual's body was recovered via short-haul with support from a ground team of mountaineering rangers. Source: Denali National Park and Preserve ([5/29](#), [5/30](#), [5/31](#), [6/1](#))

### **Gateway Arch National Park**

#### **Fugitive found at park**

On June 7, NPS staff spotted a 54-year-old who had a nationwide warrant out for the suspected murder of their two siblings in Highland Park, Illinois, two days prior. The individual was arrested shortly thereafter by local law enforcement in St. Louis, Missouri. The suspect remains in custody. Source: [KSDK](#)

### **Gettysburg National Military Park**

#### **Suspicious package**

On May 28 at around 7 AM, an employee spotted a "suspicious package" outside the main entrance of the visitor center. The Pennsylvania State Police bomb squad responded and all entrances to the building were blocked off. At 11 AM, the authorities gave the all clear and the museum and visitor center reopened. An investigation into the situation is ongoing, and no other details have been disclosed. Source: [WGAL](#)

### **Grand Teton National Park**

#### **Well-known photographer on trial**

On May 31, a federal judge heard proceedings in a full-day trial for a misdemeanor charge of obstructing traffic related to an October 2023 incident in the park. The defendant, a 78-year-old well-known photographer, was charged with operating a vehicle slowly enough to interfere with the normal flow of traffic while documenting the aftermath of a suspected vehicle strike that injured the bear known as "Grizzly 610." Rangers testified in court that the unknown location of the bear's three yearling cubs, combined with commercial vehicles traveling through the corridor, as well as it being a 55-mph zone, made the situation unsafe. The defendant's attorney argued that no cars were seen behind the individual's car on body cam footage and that they did not stop in the roadway except when the three yearling cubs crossed in front of their car. The individual also argued that

the park has applied the law unequally, not charging any other people on scene and claiming in court that "[a local] should know better [than a visitor]." The individual had been given a similar citation before, in 2020, which was dismissed. Source: [Jackson Hole News and Guide](#)

## **Great Smoky Mountains National Park**

### **Hiker rescue**

On May 31, emergency services were requested for a hiker suffering from respiratory distress in a remote area "near Mount LeConte Lodge." NPS staff responded and "rendered first aid." The Tennessee National Guard utilized a Blackhawk helicopter and lowered two flight paramedics to the ground by hoist. They then hoisted the distressed hiker and their spouse into the aircraft and flew to the University of Tennessee Medical Center in Knoxville. Source: [The Fairfield Sun Times](#)

## **Great Smoky Mountains National Park**

### **Swift water rescue**

On May 27, four individuals got "trapped by swift waters" in the park. Swift water rescue teams from the NPS, Waldens Creek Volunteer Fire Department, Gatlinburg Fire Department, and Sevier County Rescue Squad responded to the scene and were able to rescue the four individuals safely. Source: [WVLT](#)

## **Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park**

### **Volcanic eruption**

On June 3 around 12:30 AM, Kīlauea volcano began erupting in an already-closed area of the park. Temporary closures of nearby roads, trails, and campgrounds were put into place for safety. On June 7, many of the closures were lifted because the eruption halted. The Maunaiki Trail and Ka'ū Desert Trail past the Footprints Exhibit remain closed due to "elevated gases and other volcanic hazards." Source: Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park [\(6/3, 6/7\)](#)

## **Lake Clark National Park and Preserve**

### **Plane crash**

On June 10, a small plane carrying six people, including flight crew, crashed in the Kijik Lake area of the park. All of the occupants survived the crash and were rescued by an Alaska Air National Guard helicopter. One injured passenger was transported to Anchorage for further medical evaluation. The cause of the accident is under investigation. Source: [Lake Clark National Park and Preserve](#)

## **Lake Mead National Recreation Area**

### **Fire**

On June 9 at about 12:30 AM, a fire broke out at the Las Vegas Boat Harbor Marina. Several agencies responded to the scene and were able to contain it "within hours." About 15 boats were damaged or destroyed by the fire. There is a partial closure in place on the R and I docks. The cause is under investigation. Source: [Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)

### **Mount Rainier National Park**

#### **Skier fatality**

On May 18, a skier set out to ski tour above Paradise and never returned. On May 19, they were reported overdue and rangers initiated a ground and air search. The park's contract helicopter located an unresponsive person who appeared to have fallen about 200 feet to the base of Pebble Creek's Moraine Falls, in an area with "a large, unstable snow moat that was subject to rock and ice fall." The risk to rescuers was too high to recover the individual until a future period of more favorable conditions. On June 8, a group of park staff utilizing "traditional crevasse rescue methods" was able to recover the individual. The park's contract helicopter transported the individual's body to Kautz Creek Helibase for evaluation by the Pierce County Medical Examiner. Source: [Mount Rainier National Park](#)

### **New River Gorge National Park and Preserve**

#### **Storm damage**

On May 26, a storm downed many trees and took out power in several parts of the park. The park was able to restore power to all areas by May 29. Source: [WVNS](#)

### **Obed Wild and Scenic River**

#### **Missing person**

On May 27, a 55-year-old was reported missing to the NPS. The individual had last been seen wading in Daddy's Creek, near Devil's Breakfast Table bridge. A search is being conducted by the NPS, with support from the Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency, Tennessee Highway Patrol, Morgan County (TN) Sheriffs Office, Morgan County Rescue Squad, Cumberland County Sheriffs Office, and the Cumberland County Rescue Squad. Source: [Obed Wild and Scenic River](#)

### **Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore**

#### **Hiker fatality**

On May 29, a 45-year-old hiker was reported to have exhibited "signs of distress" before going unconscious. They were hiking towards Spray Falls near the Coves Campground. Alger County (MI) Sheriff's Office deployed a boat to the area and other personnel responded on foot. The individual was pronounced dead at the scene. Source: [Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore](#)



## **Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks**

### **Sinkhole**

On June 4, a sink hole appeared on the Generals Highway near Stoney Creek in the Sequoia National Forest. The road between Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks was closed for emergency road repair. The hole was repaired with gravel and it reopened the following day, with ongoing repairs and single-lane closures the following week.

Source: Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks ([6/4](#), [6/5](#))

## **Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks**

### **Swift water incidents**

The last week in May, the park responded to two swift water rescues on the Marble Fork of the Kaweah River. No other details were released about the incidents. The park issued a press release urging caution around the park's rivers. Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#)

[Canyon National Parks](#)

## **The White House and President's Park**

### **Vandalism**

On June 8, during Gaza cease-fire protests in Lafayette Park, several sculptures were damaged with graffiti. The following day, park staff spent time repairing the damage with power-washers and paint remover. Source: [The Washington Post](#)

## **Valles Caldera Preserve**

### **Livestock lawsuit against USFS & USFWS**

On June 5, WildEarth Guardians, Western Watersheds Project, and Caldera Action filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for violating the Endangered Species Act by allowing livestock to illegally graze in Valles Caldera National Preserve. The plaintiffs claim that over 850 trespass cattle were observed in Valles Caldera in 2023, and that it is the USFS' job to ensure fences are functional and sufficient to prevent trespass. They also argue that both agencies failed to reinstate consultation under the Endangered Species Act after the NPS documented natural resource damage in the park. Source: [Los Alamos Daily Post](#)

## **Yellowstone National Park**

### **Bison goring**

On June 1, an 83-year-old approached a bison too closely near the Storm Point Trail at Yellowstone Lake. The bison gored the individual, lifting them about a foot off the ground with its horns. The individual sustained serious injuries. Park responders transported them to the Lake Medical Clinic, where they were transferred by helicopter to the Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

## Yellowstone National Park

### Wildfire

On June 9, a lightning strike started the Milepost 17 Fire off Highway 191, 17 miles north of West Yellowstone. The fire was detected by a motorist in the park. Firefighters contained the fire at 0.1 acres on June 10. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

### Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area* - On May 22, the Federal Highway Administration approved plans to change the original scope of work that the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation originally proposed to clear a December 2022 rockslide on Route 611 in the park (many *Coalition Reports*, most recently [1/24/24](#), and [2/7/24](#)). The revised application for a special use permit is awaiting NPS approval. Source: [LehighValleyNews.com](#)
- *Denali National Park and Preserve* - On May 29, the Federal Highway Administration released a statement about the flag-flying incident that went viral the week of May 19 (see [5/29/24 Coalition Report](#)). The statement said that the NPS had relayed a visitor complaint about the noise a bridge worker's vehicle-mounted flag was making while driving on Park Road. The FHWA asked the bridge contractor, Granite Construction, to remove the vehicle's flag on May 16, in alignment with the project's goals of preserving the park's natural elements and keeping a low profile in the eyes of visitors. On June 3, the NPS released a statement that a park employee had notified staff at the FHWA without authorization and without the superintendent's knowledge. The statement iterates that the park has taken "corrective actions to ensure future park and project communications follow proper procedures." Source: *Alaska Public Media* ([5/30](#), [6/3](#))
- *Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park* - On June 1, the park finished installation of a new primitive log bridge across the a side channel of the Tiaya River, located at Mile 1.5 on the Chilkoot Trail. This will allow visitors to hike up the trail to Mile 4, for day use only, this summer. The trail was severely damaged by floods in 2021 and 2022. Repairs on the rest of the trail are ongoing. The portion of the trail in Canada is accessible, including for overnight travel. Source: [Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park](#)
- *Missouri National Recreational River* - The individual reported missing on May 24 after swimming alone in the Missouri River (see [5/29/24 Coalition Report](#)) was found deceased by a boater about a quarter-mile to the east of the exit mouth of the James River on June 2. Source: [KYNT](#) [Editor note: *The previous news article listed the individual as 23-years-old, while the more recent article lists the individual as 22-years-old. It is unclear which age is correct.*]
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - On June 10, Cedar Grove reopened for

public access for the first time since severe flooding in the winter of 2022-2023 (see [4/5/23 Coalition Report](#)). Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#)

- *Yosemite National Park* - On June 4, a 40-year-old was sentenced to life in prison for guilty charges of two counts of aggravated sexual abuse and one count of abusive sexual contact that occurred in the park in August 2016 (see [9/7/22](#) and [2/21/24 Coalition Reports](#)). The individual is a well-known professional climber and guidebook writer. Source: [USA Today](#)

## **Corrections**

In the 5/29/24 Coalition Report, we accidentally misidentified Mammoth Cave National Park as a national monument. We also misspelled the last name of Carolyn "Lynn" Rothgeb (deceased). Thank you to Ann Baugh and Bob Krumenaker, respectively, for bringing these to our attention.

## **Acknowledgments**

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- Regular Correspondent: Don Hellmann, Chris Soller
- Issue Contributors: Ann Baugh, Larry Frederick, Mike Murray, Bob Krumenaker, 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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