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The Coalition Report

Wednesday, March 20, 2024

Coalition Actions

The Coalition issued [a press release](#) expressing concern over the proposed \$150 million cut to the NPS budget for Fiscal Year 2024. Coalition Chair Phil Francis was also interviewed for [an article](#) by *National Parks Traveler* and penned [an op-ed](#) in *The Hill* about the impacts of the budget cuts.

We joined with six other organizations in submitting detailed [comments](#) to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection on the flaws and errors in the proposed revision to its state implementation plan regarding best available retrofit technology (BART) at United States Steel Clairton Works. The letter requests these concerns be addressed before submitting to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Along with National Parks Conservation Association and the Sierra Club, the Coalition provided [comments](#) to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection on a supplemental amendment to its second implementation period regional haze plan. The letter details how issues identified in 2021 have not been addressed and identifies new deficiencies.

The Coalition hosted the National Parks Conservation Association for a webinar with Coalition members to discuss their updated report and new, interactive website, [Polluted Parks](#). A [recording](#) of the webinar is available.

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.

- *National Poet Laureate visits parks* - Ada Limón, the U.S. Poet Laureate, will visit seven national park units between June and December, both presenting and transforming picnic tables into "works of public art featuring an American poem with a meaningful connection to the park." Parks include Cape Cod National Seashore, Mount Rainier National Park, Redwood National and State Parks, Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Everglades National Park, and Saguaro National Park. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Teleworkers called back to office* - On March 5, Interior Department acting deputy secretary Laura Daniel-Davis announced that "non-bargaining unit" teleworkers in regional and national offices around the U.S. will be required to work onsite 50% of the time starting on April 21. Previously, they were required to report at least twice per biweekly pay period. Those with "remote work agreements" (as opposed to "telework") will continue work as usual. Source: [Federal Times](#)
- *Wildland firefighters leaving federal service* - *Government Executive* published [an article](#) about the state of wildland firefighting within federal agencies, arguing that the pay and worker's compensation system are inadequate and the changing longevity of fire season have made the profession unpalatable. Federal agencies have seen high attrition in wildland firefighting over the past several years. Source: *Government Executive*
- *"Reimagining America's National Parks"* - On March 13, at the South by Southwest festival in Austin, Texas, Lena McDowell, the deputy director of management and administration for the NPS, gave a presentation called, "Reimagining America's National Parks." It focused on visitation growth, efforts to highlight lesser-known parks, and utilizing partnerships to fill in budget gaps. Source: [Spectrum News 1](#)
- *Op-ed in support of Bahsahwahbee NM* - On March 17, the *Las Vegas Sun* published [an op-ed](#) by Delaine Spilsbury, the Ely Shoshone Tribe's Cultural Preservation Liaison, arguing for the establishment of the proposed Bahsahwahbee National Monument to protect spiritually and culturally significant lands in the Great Basin of Nevada. Source: *Las Vegas Sun*
- *Lawsuit over cashless entrance stations* - On March 6, three individuals filed a lawsuit against the NPS for only accepting cashless payments for entry at many of its park units. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site* - *The Colorado Sun* published [an article](#) about the park's efforts to shift interpretation away from its living history programs and the challenges inherent in changing beloved traditions at parks. Source: *The Colorado Sun*
- *Boston National Historical Park* - The NPS has opened a Request for Bids for two mobile food and beverage leases in the Charlestown Yard. Initial bids should be submitted by April 7. Source: [Boston National Historical Park](#)
- *Buffalo National River* - On March 14, the NPS issued a prospectus soliciting proposals for up to 12 concession contracts for canoe rentals and shuttle services. Contracts will be for a term of ten years. Applications are due on May 31. Source: [Buffalo National River](#)
- *Cape Cod National Seashore* - On March 11, the park began a project to repave the parking area and access roads at Pilgrim Heights. The work is being executed by Classic Site Solutions, Inc. It is expected to take six weeks and closures in the area are currently in place. Source: [Cape Cod National Seashore](#)
- *Cape Lookout National Seashore* - On March 6, the park and the Foundation for Shackleford Horses published its annual report about the Shackleford Banks wild horses. Source: [Cape Lookout National Seashore](#)
- *Colonial National Historical Park* - On March 18, the park closed Island Loop Drive on Jamestown Island to vehicle traffic to protect turtles and conduct a turtle activity study. It remains open to pedestrians and cyclists. Park staff will reassess turtle activity in June and will then update their plan for reopening. Source: [Colonial National Historical Park](#)
- *Colonial National Historical Park* - The park recently completed its first phase of repairs on the Colonial Parkway. In early April, the park will begin its next phase, including some closures and detours. The project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [Colonial National Historical Park](#)
- *Colorado National Monument* - Starting on April 1, the park will update its Saddlehorn Campground reservation system to include three separate reservation windows: six months in advance, two weeks in advance, and on the same day. Reservations can be made on *Recreation.gov*. Source: [Colorado National Monument](#)
- *Dry Tortugas National Park* - Park archaeologists recently identified the remains of the *HMS Tyger*, an 18th century British warship, within the park. The boat sank in 1742 after running aground on the reefs while on patrol in the War of Jenkins Ear between Great Britain and Spain. The shipwreck was first located in 1993, but new recent research allowed the park staff to definitively identify it as the *Tyger*. Source:

[Dry Tortugas National Park](#)

- *Everglades National Park* - The *Tampa Bay Times* published [an article](#) about efforts to restore the greater Everglades region, including through the Everglades Agricultural Area Reservoir (currently under construction), which seeks to restore natural southward flows of clean water. The reservoir is expected to be complete in 2030. Source: *Tampa Bay Times*
- *Fire Island National Seashore* - On March 14, the park announced that it will conduct repairs to recent storm damage in four phases. The first phase will begin this spring with repairs to beach access stairs at Carrington and Watch Hill. The full project is expected to be complete in 2025. Source: [Fire Island National Seashore](#)
- *Fort Monroe National Monument* - The park has signed a new 10-year lease with the owner of the Paradise Ocean Club. The new lease started on March 1. The club was closed for two years due to "heated lease negotiations." The new lease limits capacity, prohibits boat access to the club, and is allowing rent reimbursement for some major repairs to the building. Source: [Daily Press](#)
- *Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park* - On April 1, the park will begin a project to remove six non-historic structures from the park and rehabilitate historic battlefield landscapes on the site. Source: [Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park](#)
- *Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve* - The Ambler Access Project Subsistence Advisory Committee, made up of members from 12 communities in the Northwest and Interior Alaska, passed a resolution to establish policies to protect subsistence resources along the proposed 211-mile road and keep it private. The road is currently undergoing a reanalysis by the Bureau of Land Management, including "further analysis of subsistence, as well as additional Tribal consultation." [Editor note: *Gates of the Arctic* is not mentioned in this article, but the Ambler Road is proposed to cross the park.] Source: [Mining News](#)
- *Gateway National Recreation Area* - On March 6, a New York Supreme Court dismissed a lawsuit seeking to block New York City from housing migrants at Floyd Bennet Field. The city has a lease agreement with the NPS to use the facilities. Source: [Daily News](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - *National Public Radio* published an "All Things Considered" [episode](#) about the linnii Initiative, which seeks to return buffalo to Blackfoot lands and the park. Source: *Boise State Public Radio*
- *Glacier National Park* - The *Montana Free Press* published [an article](#) about concessioner Xanterra's efforts to maintain and rebuild the park's fleet of iconic red "Model 706" buses. 33 of the original 35 buses remain in service since their

inception in the park in 1936. Source: *Montana Free Press*

- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - The NPS posted [an article](#) about hybrid-electric passenger ferry boats used by the Alcatraz concessioner, Alcatraz City Cruises. They debuted as the first hybrid-electric passenger ferries in the U.S. in 2008. Each ferry is estimated to save 235,292 gallons of fuel each year compared to a traditional diesel-powered ferry boat. Source: National Park Service
- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Sacramento District is welcoming public feedback and interest in establishing a Restoration Advisory Board for the Fort Barry Rifle Range, which currently is up for consideration by the Defense Environmental Restoration Program for Formerly Used Defense Sites. Comments and inquiries should be submitted by March 29. Source: [Golden Gate National Recreation Area](#)
- *Guilford Courthouse National Military Park* - The park has received almost \$2 million in federal funding for infrastructure upgrades, improved accessibility at the park, and rehabilitation of the historic Coble Barn. Source: [WFDD](#)
- *Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail, Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area* - The two park units announced that they have completed audio-described versions of their official park brochures, both available online and on the UniDescription Project mobile app. Source: [Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail](#)
- *Indiana Dunes National Park* - The park has received \$22 million in Great American Outdoors Act funding to stabilize and restore the Bailly Homestead, Good Fellow Camp Lodge, and the House of Tomorrow. Restoration will begin this spring. Source: [Indiana Dunes National Park](#)
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - Park staff recently participated in the local Partners for Outdoor Recreation Summit. The dialogue included shared interests and challenges, best practices, and innovative ideas to support outdoor recreation on Las Vegas area public lands. Source: [Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)
- *Lassen Volcanic National Park* - On March 14, the park announced that reservations are now required for all campsites at Butte Lake Campground and are now available on *Recreation.gov*. Source: [Lassen Volcanic National Park](#)
- *Mount Rainier National Park, North Cascades National Park* - *The Seattle Times* published [an article](#) about the Cascades Butterfly Project, a park and volunteer effort to identify butterflies in the two parks to be used in monitoring climate change. Source: *The Seattle Times*
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - The park will soon begin a three-year, \$113 million rehabilitation of the seawalls around Tidal Basin and along the Potomac

River through West Potomac Park. The project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Temporary pedestrian detours will be in place at times. Several hundred trees will be removed during the process, and replanting will occur at the project's conclusion. Source: [National Mall and Memorial Parks](#)

- *New River Gorge National Park and Preserve* - The park, in partnership with Active Southern West Virginia, received a grant from the National Park Foundation to increase accessibility information on park trails and river access points, and for adaptive programs in the park. Source: [New River Gorge National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Olympic National Park* - The NPS has signed a Finding of No Significant Impact for the US 101 Elwha River Bridge Replacement Downstream Mitigation plan, including the construction of 12 engineered log jams. This will mitigate impacts from the bridge and "emergency scour countermeasures" in 2016 and 2017. The mitigation is required under asserted treaty rights and the Clean Water Act. Source: [Olympic National Park](#)
- *Padre Island National Seashore* - Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi recently received a scientific collection and research permit that will allow them to support the sea turtle program utilizing drones. Source: [Padre Island National Seashore](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - A new book by Ruth M. Alexander was published: *Democracy's Mountain: Longs Peak and the Unfulfilled Promises of America's National Parks*. The book outlines park management challenges on Longs Peak in the 1960s amidst changing recreation patterns and calls for more stringent resource management. Source: [The Colorado Sun](#)
- *Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* - The *Ventura County Star* published [an article](#) about efforts to rebuild some of the buildings at the Paramount Ranch movie set. They burned during the 2018 Woolsey Fire. Framing on the buildings started this month. Construction is expected to be complete by the end of the year. The \$26 million contract for this project and two buildings at Rocky Oaks is being executed by AMG & Associates, Inc. Source: *Ventura County Star*
- *Saratoga National Historical Park* - On March 18, the park began a project to improve the South Parking Lot and trailhead access. The construction is expected to last roughly three weeks. Source: [Saratoga National Historical Park](#)
- *Shenandoah National Park* - On March 7, the park launched the fourth web-based curriculum unit for high school students. The newest program is called "Life at Lewis Mountain: Shenandoah in the Jim Crow Era." Source: [Shenandoah National Park](#)
- *Shiloh National Military Park* - In 2014, the City of Corinth, Tennessee, sold the

former West Corinth Elementary School property to the Friends of the Siege and Battle of Corinth Commission, which held onto the property until December 2023, when it was turned over to the park. On March 5, the city board granted an NPS request to close Marsea Street, which runs between the new property and another parcel owned by the NPS, and "a section of School Street that exists only on property maps." The park plans to eventually pull the asphalt up and turn it into green space. Source: [Daily Corinthian](#)

- *Women's Rights National Historical Park* - Judy Hart, a Coalition Member and former NPS employee, was recently featured on the podcast, *The Secret Lives of Parks*, talking about her efforts to get the park established in the 1970s. Source: [The Secret Lives of Parks](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - On March 13, the park announced the creation of a new bear management area in Hayden Valley, which will prohibit off-trail travel between July 15 and September 15. They also decommissioned an existing bear management area in the Firehole River area. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - Over the winter, park staff monitoring wolves noted that far fewer prey kills were observed, likely due to the lack of snow depth in the area. High snowpack allows for wolves to take advantage of weakened animals. Source: [The Spokesman-Review](#)

Personnel Changes

- *Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park* - Joshua Manley was selected as the new superintendent. Joshua has ten years of NPS experience, most recently as the superintendent of Ninety Six National Historic Site. Source: [Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park](#)
- *Cabrillo National Monument* - Chris Rodriguez was selected as the new superintendent. Chris has 16 years of NPS experience, most recently as the chief of facilities and administration of Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site, John Muir National Historic Site, Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial, and Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park. He begins his new role on April 21. Source: [Times of San Diego](#)
- *Eisenhower National Historic Site, Gettysburg National Military Park* - Kristina "Kris" Heister was selected as the new superintendent. Kris has over 30 years of NPS experience, most recently as the deputy superintendent at the two parks. She begins her new role on March 24. Source: [Gettysburg National Military Park](#)
- *Indiana Dunes National Park* - Jason Taylor was selected as the new superintendent. Jason has 15 years of federal agency experience, most recently as the director of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute for the U.S. Forest

Service. He will begin his new role later this spring. Source: [Indiana Dunes National Park](#)

- *Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument, Virgin Islands National Park* - Penelope "Penny" Del Bene was selected as the new superintendent. Penny has 19 years of federal agency experience, most recently as the superintendent of Biscayne National Park and acting superintendent at Virgin Islands. She will begin her new role on April 7. Source: [Virgin Islands National Park](#)

Park People

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

Deceased

- Wayne Alan Gibb, 91, passed away on March 4. In his retirement, Wayne volunteered in Rocky Mountain National Park, "with a group that build and cleared trails, cut trees, and repaired fencing." Source: [Longmont Leader](#)
- Paul Fodor passed away recently. Paul was a long-time ranger at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. Source: Patricia Buccello
- Barton McKown Fowlkes, 49, passed away on March 2. He worked in Glacier National Park and Zion National Park for a time. Source: [The Virginian-Pilot](#)
- Orlynn "Joe" Halladay, 90, passed away on February 15. Orlynn worked for the NPS for many years, including stints at Death Valley National Park, Great Basin National Park, Blue Ridge Parkway, and Badlands National Park. He retired from Yellowstone National Park as a district interpreter. Source: [Daniels Family Funeral Homes and Crematory](#), Sue Consolo-Murphy
- Arnold Morris Johnson, 89, passed away on March 5. Arnold worked in buildings and utilities with the National Park Service at Yosemite National Park and Rocky Mountain National Park. Source: [Estes Park News](#)
- LaVonne Kay Pierson, 81, passed away on March 3. Kay and her husband Charlie, worked in Yellowstone, "as well as several other National and State Parks across the United States" every summer between 1993 and 1998, during their retirement. Source: [Legacy/Winscott Road Funeral Home and Cremation Services](#)
- Paula Steichen Polega, 80, passed away on January 13. Paula was the granddaughter of Carl and Lilian Sandburg and lived at Connemara, the Sandburg farm that is now the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site, from 1945 to 1952. After it became a park, she visited regularly and "became a strong supporter of the National Park Service's management of the estate and the many volunteers who

helped there." Source: [Hendersonville Lightning](#)

- Michael "Mike" J. Stevens, 77, passed away on January 24. Mike worked at Yellowstone National Park for 35 summers, including 20 of those as "a step-on tour guide." He co-wrote a book, *The Guide to Yellowstone Waterfalls and Their Discovery*, and provided many interviews for magazines and television about the park. Source: [Ventura County Star](#)

Retired (or soon to be)

- Mia Monroe, a ranger and "community liaison" at Muir Woods National Monument for over 40 years, is retiring. The *Marin Independent Journal* published [an article](#) about her career. Source: *Marin Independent Journal*
- Robert Parmenter recently retired after 21 years at Valles Caldera National Preserve, both with the NPS and Valles Caldera Trust. He served as chief scientist and chief of science and resource stewardship over his career. He also helped establish the Jemez Mountains Research Learning Center, in partnership with Bandelier National Monument and the U.S. Geological Survey. Source: [Valles Caldera National Preserve](#)

Open for Comment

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

- *Canyonlands National Park* - Public comment is [open through March 28](#) on a comprehensive river management plan for the Green and Colorado Rivers. Source: [Canyonlands National Park](#)
- *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](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - Public comment is [open through March 27](#) for a long-term Fire Management Plan. Source: [NBC Montana](#)
- *Great Sand Dunes National Park* - Public comment is [open through March 29](#) on a Transportation and Transit Plan for the park due to increased visitation and changing visitor use patterns. Source: [Alamosa News](#)
- *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - Public comment is [open through March 22](#) on a Kīlauea Summit Area and Corridor Management Plan. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)
- *Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument* - Public comment is [open through March 20](#) on a draft programmatic agreement between the NPS, Maine State

Historic Preservation Office, and four Tribes to streamline consultation for annual maintenance planning. Source: [Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument](#)

- *Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve* - Public comment is [open through March 26](#) on proposed definitions of external boundaries of the Resident Zone in the Superintendent's Compendium. Source: [Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - Public comment is [open through April 5](#) on a proposal to implement a 30-day mandatory dry time for some types of boats on park waters to prevent the spread of invasive aquatic species. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)
- *Zion National Park* - Public comment is [open through April 10](#) on a plan to improve roads and trails in the park's South Entrance Area. Source: [Zion National Park](#)

Other Department of the Interior News

- *New USFWS unit* - On March 11, the Department of the Interior announced the establishment of the Everglades to Gulf Conservation Area in southwest Florida. It is the 571st unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$120 million for climate resilience on Tribal lands* - On March 14, the Department of the Interior announced over \$120 million for 146 projects to support Tribal communities in responding to climate-related threats. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$55 million for orphaned wells on Tribal lands* - On March 15, the Department of the Interior announced \$55 million in funding available to mitigate orphaned oil and gas wells on Tribal lands. 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.

New Public Laws

March 1 – The President signed into law H.R. 7463, making further continuing appropriations for Fiscal Year 2024. Signed on March 1, 2024 (Public Law 118–40). The law extends funding for all federal agencies, with some funding expiring on March 8 (including funding for the National Park Service) and funding for other agencies expiring

on March 22.

March 9 – The President signed into law H.R. 4366, making consolidated appropriations for Fiscal Year 2024. The bill extends funding for several federal agencies, including the National Park Service, through the remainder of the fiscal year, which ends on September 30, 2024 (Public Law 118–42). See House Actions on H.R. 4366 on March 6, below, for more information about the provisions of the law as it impacts the National Park Service.

Senate Actions

March 8 – The Senate agreed to the motion to concur in the amendment of the House of Representatives to the amendment of the Senate to H.R. 4366, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024, by a vote of 75 yeas to 22 nays. The bill now goes to the President to be signed into law. The bill includes funding for the National Park Service for the remainder of FY24, which ends on September 30, 2024. See House Actions on H.R. 4366 on March 6, below, for more information about the provisions of the bill as it impacts the National Park Service.

March 12 – The Committee on the Budget concluded a hearing to examine the President’s proposed budget request for Fiscal Year 2025 after receiving testimony from Shalanda D. Young, Director, Office of Management and Budget.

March 12 – The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources concluded a hearing to examine the findings and recommendations of the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission after receiving testimony from Meryl Harrell, Deputy Under Secretary of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment; Joan Mooney, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Policy, Management and Budget; Kelly Norris, Wyoming State Forestry Division, Cheyenne; Cody Desautel, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Nespelem, Washington, on behalf of the Intertribal Timber Council; and Madelene McDonald, Denver Water, Denver, Colorado.

March 12 – The Committee on Environment and Public Works ordered favorably reported several bills, including S. 3791, to reauthorize the America’s Conservation Enhancement Act. Sec. 108 of the bill reauthorizes funding for the Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act through 2030. That act includes the authority for the Chesapeake Bay Gateway Watertrails Network, which is managed by the National Park Service.

House Actions

March 6 – The House passed H.R. 4366, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024, by a vote of 339 yeas to 85 nays. This bill includes funding found in six appropriations bills for various federal agencies, including the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, which funds the National Park Service for Fiscal Year 2024.

The bill provides a total appropriation for the National Park Service for FY24 of \$3.32

billion in discretionary appropriations and \$1.81 billion in mandatory appropriations. The amount of discretionary appropriations is a \$150 million reduction from the FY23 level of \$3.475 billion and a \$439 reduction from the President's request. Since fixed costs of \$125 million (mostly for the federal pay raise) were requested by the President, the NPS is going to start out with at least \$275 million less than the amount needed to maintain staffing at current levels.

Within the total appropriation of \$3.32 billion in discretionary appropriations, the bill has the following funding levels in the different NPS accounts:

- Operation of the National Park System - \$2.88 billion, which is \$35 million less than FY23, and \$301.3 million less than the President requested. Cyclic maintenance is funded at \$188.2 million, the same as FY23, but Repair and Rehabilitation was reduced from \$135.9 million in FY23 to \$110.9 million in FY24.
- National Recreation and Preservation - \$91.2 million, which is \$1.3 million less than FY23, and \$3.9 million less than the President requested. The heritage areas partnership program funding is funded at the same level as FY23 - \$29.2 million.
- Historic Preservation Fund - \$188.6 million, which is \$15.8 million less than FY23, and \$10.7 million less than the President requested. The Save America's Treasures grant program is funded at \$25.5 million, which is \$1 million less than FY23.
- Construction - \$172.2 million, which is \$67.5 million less than FY23, and \$114.3 million less than the President requested. The bill appropriates \$7.866 million for housing, which is \$7 million less than the President requested.
- Centennial Challenge - \$12 million, which is \$3 million less than FY23, and \$3 million less than the President requested.
- Land and Water Conservation Fund – The bill appropriates \$429.8 million in mandatory appropriations from the total of \$900 million for all the land management agencies. Of this amount, the federal NPS land acquisition amount is only \$41.9 million, which is less than the \$66.4 million NPS received in FY23. Of the \$429.8 million, \$305.5 million is for the State Assistance programs, and an additional \$20 million is for the American Battlefield Protection Program.
- Great American Outdoors Act - \$1.38 billion in mandatory appropriations, which is slightly higher than the \$1.33 billion in FY23, but some of this involves better estimates from previous fiscal years for project work and a reallocation of unobligated balances.

In addition to the funding levels noted above, the bill also includes the following administrative provisions of note:

- Sec. 125, increases the ceiling on funding for administering the Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve from \$5 million to \$18 million.
- Sec. 421, extends the authorization for the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, which provides the land management agencies with authority to collect fees, for an additional year through October 1, 2025.
- Sec. 427, continues protections for Chaco Culture National Historical Park from oil and gas leasing within the withdrawal area next to the park.

- Sec. 430, provides additional requirements on the Bureau of Land Management to engage stakeholders on the wind farm project next to Minidoka National Historic Site prior to issuing a right-of-way permit for the project.
- Sec. 443, includes the National Park Service under the Good Neighbor Authority, which authorizes timber harvesting by states and counties on public lands. Prior to this, the authority was only available to the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. The administration had requested this authority be extended to the NPS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Sec. 446, rescinds NPS unobligated balances from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

March 6 – The Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held a hearing on:

- H.R. 6482, the "Enhancing Geothermal Production on Federal Lands Act;"
- H.R. 7370, the "Geothermal Energy Opportunity Act;"
- H.R. 7375, to amend the Mineral Leasing Act to improve the assessment of expression of interest fees, and for other purposes;
- H.R. 7377, the "Royalty Resiliency Act;"
- H.R. 7409, the "Harnessing Energy at Thermal Sources Act;" and
- H.R. 7422, the "Geothermal Cost-Recovery Authority Act of 2024."

Testimony was heard from Representatives Ocasio-Cortez, Hageman, Fulcher, Hunt, and Curtis; Benjamin E. Grubery, Deputy Assistant Director, Energy, Minerals, and Realty, Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior; and public witnesses.

March 7 – President Joe Biden delivered his State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress, pursuant to the provisions of H. Con. Res. 93. He was escorted into the House Chamber by a committee comprised of Representatives Scalise, Emmer, Stefanik, Hudson, Palmer, Moore (UT), McClain, Cole, Reschenthaler, Rogers (KY), Jeffries, Clark (MA), Aguilar, Lieu, DelBene, Clyburn, Neguse, Underwood, Escobar, Trahan, and Kildee, and Senators Schumer, Durbin, Murray, Stabenow, Klobuchar, Warner, Baldwin, McConnell, Thune, Barrasso, Capito, and Ernst. The President's message was referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed (H. Doc. 118–94).

March 7 – The Committee on the Budget held a markup on legislation on the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2025. Legislation on the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2025 was ordered reported, without amendment.

March 7 – The Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing on several bills, including the following of interest to the NPS:

- H.R. 1584, the "Plum Island National Monument Act;"
- H.R. 1647, the "Salem Maritime National Historical Park Redesignation and Boundary Study Act;"

- H.R. 6852, the "Holcombe Rucker Park Landmark Act."

Testimony was heard from Representatives Amodei, Espaillat, Crane, LaLota, and Maloy; Mike Reynolds, Deputy Director, National Park Service, Department of the Interior; Greg Smith, Associate Deputy Chief of the National Forest System, U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture; Daryl Seymore, Supervisor, Navajo County, Arizona; Scott Strong, Director, Division of State Parks, Department of Natural Resources, Utah; Bryce Shields, District Attorney, Pershing County, Nevada; and public witnesses.

March 7 – The Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing entitled "Monetizing Nature and Locking up Public Land: The Implications of Biden's Strategy for Natural Capital Accounting." Testimony was heard from Marlo Oaks, State Treasurer, Utah; and public witnesses.

March 12 –The Committee on Natural Resources held a markup on several bills, including the following of interest to the National Park Service:

- H.R. 5443, to establish a policy regarding appraisal and valuation services for real property for a transaction over which the Secretary of the Interior has jurisdiction, and for other purposes.
- H.R. 5665, to require a comprehensive assessment of certain federal trails, campsites, boat docks, and outdoor recreation facilities to determine the accessibility options for individuals with disabilities, and for other purposes.
- H.R. 6235, to amend the Harmful Algal Blooms and Hypoxia Research and Control Act of 1998 to address harmful algal blooms, and for other purposes.
- H.R. 6342, to promote and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities for members of the Armed Forces and veterans on federal recreational lands and waters.
- H.R. 6368, to assist Tribal governments in the management of buffalo and buffalo habitat and the reestablishment of buffalo on Tribal lands. Sec. 6 of the bill authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to enter into an agreement with a Tribe or Tribal organization to dispose of surplus buffalo on federal land administered by the Department, as applicable, by transporting the buffalo onto Tribal land.

H.R. 5443, H.R. 5665, H.R. 6235, H.R. 6342, and H.R. 6368 were ordered reported, as amended.

Incidents

Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.

Alaska Region

Racially hostile workforce lawsuit moves forward

A federal court in the District of Alaska has allowed a lawsuit against the NPS and Department of the Interior for allegations of a racially hostile work environment. A claim on retaliation will not advance. Source: [BNN](#)

Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park

Two assaults

On March 6, an individual was assaulted on the Canal Towpath Trail about a half-mile upstream from the Point of Rocks parking area in Frederick, Maryland. The person assaulted said that they were forced to the ground and had their nose and mouth covered by the assailant's hand before they were able to escape. On March 10, an individual was reported chasing a person on the towpath trail about a mile upstream of the Nolands Ferry parking area, headed toward the Point of Rocks parking area. The description for the suspect and their vehicle is similar from both incidents. The NPS is looking for any information the public might provide. Source: [Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, Herald-Mail Media](#)

Everglades National Park

Crocodile bite

On March 10, a 68-year-old capsized their recreational sailboat in the basin at Flamingo Marina. They were attempting to swim back to shore with the boat when they were observed going under the water. NPS staff responded immediately and found the individual on shore with a laceration on their leg, believed to be a crocodile bite. The individual was transported by Miami Dade Fire and Rescue to a nearby hospital and was said to be stable. Park staff are coordinating with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and are monitoring the suspected crocodile, "which is easily identifiable." The park has an American Crocodile-Human Interaction Response Plan and will follow its protocols. Source: [Everglades National Park](#)

Sitka National Historical Park

Boundary dispute

In November 2023, an attorney for the Southeast Alaska Land Trust sent a letter to the park arguing that a recently constructed boardwalk violates a city-owned conservation easement managed by the land trust. The park has stated that the boardwalk is on park land, not on the easement. A 2012 boundary survey shows the boardwalk in the easement area, but a 2015 re-survey redefined the boundary based on improvements to technology and changes to the high tide line. The 2015 survey places the boardwalk on park land. The land trust has stated that the 2015 survey was never filed, so the boundary change was not legal. The land trust has concerns that the boardwalk has unnecessarily introduced foot traffic to fragile eelgrass beds. Source: [KCAW](#)

Washington Monument

High winds

On March 10, the Washington Monument closed due to predictions of wind gusts up to 55 miles per hour. The park stated that high winds do not threaten the monument itself, but are a danger to visitors standing in line. Source: [The Hill](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Death Valley National Park* - The park recently reopened another 195 miles of remote backcountry roads in the park. They have been closed since flash floods associated with Hurricane Hilary in August 2023. The repairs were completed by both park staff and contractors, with funding from the Federal Highway Administration and the NPS Disaster Supplemental fund source. Repairs are ongoing on other roads in the park, including Titus Canyon. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - On March 14, the 70-year-old celebrity actor that was charged with entering a closed thermal area at Mammoth Terraces in November 2023 (see [1/10/24](#) and [2/7/24 Coalition Reports](#)) was fined \$500 and required to pay \$1,000 to the Yellowstone Forever Geological Fund, in addition to other fees. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

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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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