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**The Coalition Report**  
**Wednesday, March 6, 2024**

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**Thank you to all our dedicated members.**  
**Your support is invaluable in protecting our national parks.**

**Donate**

**You Are Invited**

Please join Coalition Chair Phil Francis on Tuesday, March 12 at 2 p.m. Eastern Time for a webinar with the National Parks Conservation Association to discuss their 2024 report, "How Air Pollution and Climate Change Continue to Harm America's National Parks."

[Register on Zoom.](#)

**Coalition Actions**

We issued press releases on [February 26](#) and [March 5](#), urging Congress to pass a bill to prevent a government shutdown and adequately fund the national parks, which have been operating for years with inadequate budgets.

Coalition Chair Phil Francis was also interviewed for a [National Parks Traveler article](#) about the proposed \$150 million cut to the National Park Service budget.

The Coalition submitted [a letter](#) to the Maryland House of Delegates in support of HB 1473, which would require the Department of Natural Resources to phase out lead or lead-based ammunition for hunting by December 31, 2026.

The Coalition sent [a letter](#) to Senator Chris Van Hollen and Representative John Sarbanes in support of their bills designating the Chesapeake National Recreation Area.

The Coalition provided [testimony](#) to the Maryland Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment in support of Senate Bill 983, which would phase out lead and lead-based ammunition.

Through [a press release](#) issued by Archaeology Southwest, the Coalition offered support for their report on orphaned and abandoned oil and gas wells and urged the Department of Interior to finalize its rules to address the clean up.

### **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.*

- *2023 NPS visitation stats* - The NPS released its 2023 annual visitation statistics. Visitation increased by 4% over 2022, with 325.5 million recreation visits. 20 parks set a record for annual visits. Visitation remains lower than pre-pandemic attendance (327.5 million in 2019) and the all-time high of just under 331 million in 2016. The Blue Ridge Parkway had the most visits at 16.7 million. Source: [National Park Service](#), [E&E News](#), [Smithsonian Magazine](#)
- *Climate resilience funding* - On February 27, the Department of the Interior announced \$195 million in Inflation Reduction Act funding for 40 climate resilience and restoration projects across several hundred NPS units. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *John P. Parker House SRS* - On February 29, the NPS announced it will soon be launching the John P. Parker House Special Resource Study to evaluate criteria for possible NPS protection. The Parker house is located in Ripley, Ohio. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Plastics in national parks* - The 5 Gyres Institute released their [2023 Plastic Free National Parks report](#), which gives measurable data on plastic pollution in national parks and supports the Department of the Interior's goal of phasing out single-use plastics by 2032. The organization hosts an annual "Trashblitz" that collects data on trash found in parks. Recommendations from the report include passing legislation that would codify the prohibition of single-use plastics in parks, increasing access to beverage refill stations, implementing reusable silverware and dishware for eating establishments, and expanding waste audits across the National Park System. Source: [5 Gyres Institute](#)

- *Using cell phone data to estimate NPS visitation* - The journal *PLOS ONE* published [a new study](#) that compares commercially-available cellphone data to National Park Service estimates of visitation data. The study found that NPS visitation counts are generally lower than raw cell data counts, except for National Memorials and National Monuments, where NPS counts were higher. The study found that cell phone data may be useful for future visitation estimates, though there are a number of variables that may affect accuracy and on-the-ground estimates continue to be important. Source: [Environmental Protection Agency](#)
- *"3 reasons to be concerned about Congress's Budget Negotiations"* - The National Parks Conservation Association published [an article](#) with this title, arguing that current appropriations bills would decrease staffing in parks, reduce resource and infrastructure, and include riders that would weaken clean water rules, species protections, mining regulations, and efforts to improve diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the NPS. Source: National Parks Conservation Association
- *2024 congressional scorecard for national parks* - The National Parks Action Fund published its annual ["Congressional Scorecard"](#) rating House Representatives from the 118th Congress on their voting records toward national parks. Source: National Parks Action Fund
- *AI-generated campaign falsely shows migrant housing in national parks* - The National Republican Congressional Committee launched a digital advertising campaign utilizing images created by artificial intelligence, falsely showing migrant housing popping up in 15 national parks. This is in response to the migrant housing currently in place at Floyd Bennett Field, a unit of the NPS. Source: [E&E News](#)
- *Green Parks Plan on Lake Superior* - The five national park units around Lake Superior have been working toward a goal to decarbonize operations since the beginning of 2023. A recent [press release](#) gave an update on progress, including updates to heating and cooling systems, identifying solar options, and piloting electric maintenance equipment. Source: Isle Royale National Park
- *National Parks with most EV chargers* - The General, a vehicle insurance company, published [an article](#) documenting the "5 National Parks with the Most [Electric Vehicle] Charging Stations." They were ranked by the number of stations and chargers per 100,000 acres. [Editor note: The article appears to focus on "national parks" in name, not all units of the NPS.] The top five were Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Everglades, and Zion National Parks. Source: [The General](#)
- *"National parks help us grapple with our hardest histories"* - *The Saturday Evening Post* published [an article](#) with this title, highlighting national park units that commemorate difficult American stories, including Amache National Historic Site, Kalaupapa National Historical Park, and Andersonville National Historic Site. Source: *The Saturday Evening Post*

- *"Inside the 'wild wild West' of California national park gift shops"* - SFGate published [an article](#) by this name, describing the management of gift shops by park partners and concessioners, the most popular items, and trends in retail. Source: SFGate
- *New novel based on ISB* - On February 27, Minotaur Books released *Leave No Trace*, a new novel by Jeff Ayers and A.J. Landau (Jon Land) that follows a National Park Service Investigative Services Branch special agent to several national parks while trying to solve a domestic terrorism case. Source: [National Parks Conservation Association](#)

### **Around the Parks**

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

- *Anacostia Park* - PBS News Hour published [a 3-minute segment](#) of Akiima Price, founder of The Friends of Anacostia Park, on its "Brief But Spectacular" program. Source: *PBS News Hour*
- *American Battlefield Protection Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On February 29, the NPS announced the award of \$1 million for four Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants to protect 58.58 acres in Arkansas, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Bandelier National Monument* - On February 29, the NPS and Federal Aviation Administration completed an air tour management plan for the park. It prohibits commercial air tours over the park and within a half-mile of the boundary. The operating parameters will take effect in 180 days. Source: [Bandelier National Monument](#)
- *Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park* - The park will begin a road improvement project along South Rim Drive starting in late March. The project will rehabilitate the section from the park boundary on Highway 247 to the visitor center. It is expected to be complete by November. Delays and reduced parking are expected. Further road work along South Rim Drive will also continue in 2025. Source: [Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park](#)
- *Bryce Canyon National Park* - Starting on April 1, private stock reservations will be moved to *Recreation.gov*. Source: [Bryce Canyon National Park](#)
- *Cape Cod National Seashore* - The park, in collaboration with Ducks Unlimited, will soon begin to remove trees and shrubbery from the Herring River floodplain in order to restore 890 acres of salt marsh. The project is being funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Foundation. Source: [Cape Cod National Seashore](#)

- *Catoctin Mountain Park, Prince William Forest, Shenandoah National Park* - The University of Pennsylvania published [an article](#) about a collaboration between the NPS and the school's Urban Heritage Project that is documenting formerly segregated cabin camps at the three parks through oral histories and cultural landscape reports. Source: *Penn Today*
- *Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park* - On March 5, the park began a \$12.7 million preservation and rehabilitation project on historic canal features in Georgetown, around Locks 1, 2, and 5, and the canal walls at Level 4. Intermittent towpath detours in will take place. The work is expected to continue through Winter 2026. Source: [Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park](#)
- *Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park* - On February 28, the NPS notified Georgetown Heritage that it will terminate its philanthropic partnership agreement, effective April 29. The NPS press release notes that "terminating a philanthropic agreement is unusual and happens only after exhausting all other avenues to try to resolve the issues." The park has stated that its longstanding philanthropic partner C&O Canal Trust will expand its work into Georgetown. A statement by Georgetown Heritage noted they were surprised by the decision and cited differing visions for the canal improvements. The canal boat in Georgetown is also run by Georgetown Heritage under a different agreement with the NPS, and it will continue to operate. Source: [Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park](#), [The Georgetowner](#)
- *Crater Lake National Park* - On March 4, the park announced that ExplorUS will take over the concession contract at Crater Lake. This comes shortly after the announcement of the termination of the contract with Crater Lake Hospitality. It "will take a few weeks" for the transfer of the concession from one company to another. ExplorUS runs hospitality operations at over 50 locations across the U.S., including several national park units. Source: [Oregon Live/The Oregonian](#)
- *Death Valley National Park* - The park released [a brief review of 2023](#), including numbers related to maintenance, interpretive programming, and search and rescue. Source: Death Valley National Park
- *Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On February 27, the NPS released the "Annual Report on the Economic Impact of the Federal Historic Tax Credits for Fiscal Year 2022," which was produced by the Rutgers University Center for Urban Policy Research through a cooperative agreement with the NPS. The report showed that the NPS certified \$7.3 billion in private investments toward historic preservation, contributing \$13.7 billion in goods and services. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)

- *George Washington Birthplace National Monument* - On February 22, the park launched a new podcast called, "Upon this Land: History, Mystery and Monuments." It focuses on emerging research and the history of the park in honor of the upcoming 250th anniversary of the American Revolution (2026), 100th anniversary of the park (2030), and 300th anniversary of Washington's birth (2032). Source: [George Washington Birthplace National Monument](#)
- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area* - The NPS has asked the public to support their future salvage and cleanup efforts by reporting specific locations on the lake where vessels have sunk or have been exposed during low water. They will begin initial data analysis in April. Source: [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#)
- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - On March 5, the Bureau of Reclamation released a final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to update operating guidelines for Glen Canyon and Hoover Dams through the end of 2026. The new guidelines will "lead to at least 3 million acre-feet of system water conservation savings." The Department of the Interior also announced new System Conservation Implementation Agreements that commit three California water entities to conserve 400,000 acre-feet of water in Lake Mead. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - The park, in coordination with VCTO Labs, has developed a 3-D map of the entire island of Alcatraz. The map was created pro bono by a team utilizing cameras, drones, and "robot dogs." It was created as a safeguard against the island succumbing to sea level rise. It is being considered for use in virtual reality and video game applications. Parts of the park that are not open to visitors and staff were able to be filmed. Source: [Seattle Times](#)
- *Grand Teton National Park* - On February 21 and 22, the Wyoming House and Senate approved proposals to sell the Kelly Parcel to the federal government for no less than \$100 million. The proposals include a provision that would require leasing the land for livestock grazing and allowing for public hunting in perpetuity. A House-approved amendment requires the Bureau of Land Management to retract rights-of-way restrictions in the preferred alternative of the Rock Springs Resource Management Plan in order to allow the Kelly Parcel purchase to go through. The two legislative bodies will need to reconcile differences in clauses before the sale authorization is complete. [Editor note: The Coalition Report has been following the Kelly Parcel sale closely; please see [12/13/23](#) and [2/7/24](#), and [2/21/24](#) for background.] Source: [Oil City News](#)
- *Gulf Islands National Seashore* - On March 1, the park will open access to three new parking lots, seven beach crossovers, and a half-mile multi-use trail in the Perdido Key Area. The improvements were part of a six-month \$2.6 million project funded by Gulf Restoration funding associated with the Deepwater Horizon oil spill settlement, in partnership with the Florida Trustee Implementation Group. Source:

## [Gulf Islands National Seashore](#)

- *Haleakalā National Park* - The U.S. Geological Survey published [an article](#) about efforts to eradicate avian malaria among native honeycreepers in Maui by controlling mosquito populations. (*Editor note: Haleakalā is not explicitly mentioned in the article, but has been involved in the initiative.*) Source: U.S. Geological Survey
- *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - On March 4, the park began a project to install a traffic roundabout just beyond the park entrance, realign Crater Rim Drive, and add an administrative lane at the entrance station. The project will enhance safety, traffic flow, and the visitor experience at the junction. Infrastructure improvements will also be made to water, fiber optic, and electrical lines underground between the park entrance and visitor center. Delays are expected and some parking will be used for staging materials during the project. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)
- *History of Equal Rights grant program* (an NPS-administered program) - On February 21, the NPS announced \$5 million for eight projects in six states through the History of Equal Rights grant program, which is under the umbrella of the Historic Preservation Fund. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Hopewell Culture National Historical Park* - The park has opened bids for agricultural permits for hay cutting on 578 acres. The permit will last three-years. Applications are due March 16. Source: [The Pike County News Watchman](#)
- *Hovenweep National Monument, Natural Bridges National Monument* - On March 31, both parks will transition to a fully cashless fee system and camping reservations will move to *Recreation.gov*. Source: [Hovenweep National Monument](#)
- *Kalaupapa National Historical Park* - *Honolulu Civil Beat* published [an article](#) about the park's continued closure, which began in early 2020 due to the pandemic and has not yet lifted. Visits to the park have always been via guided tour and the commercial use authorization application process "is frozen." The park stated that they are working with the Hawai'i Department of Health to develop a new approval process to "address concerns and work through issues." The DOH said that commercial tours were expected to begin "some time in 2024." Source: *Honolulu Civil Beat*
- *Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument* - The park received \$140,000 in Inflation Reduction Act funding to continue improving culverts and bridges to improve aquatic passages for endangered Atlantic salmon. Source: [Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument](#)
- *Lake Chelan National Recreation Area* - The North Cascades Conservation Council,

Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs, and Wilderness Watch created a petition to the NPS to reconsider its recent announcement that they would not staff or open the Stehekin Visitor Center this summer. Chelan (WA) Mayor Pro-Tem Tim Hollingsworth also raised the issue at the Chelan city council meeting on February 27. Source: [Lake Chelan Mirror](#)

- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program* (an NPS-administered program) - The *Boulder City Review* published [an article](#) about the park's "More to Mead" initiative, a partnership effort to identify outdoor recreation opportunities beyond motorized boating and improve economic activities during low-water events. Partners include Get Outdoors Nevada, the Nevada Outdoor Business Coalition, and the Boulder City Chamber of Commerce. The campaign was supported by the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. Source: *Boulder City Review*
- *Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area* - The NPS has decided to pursue use of a categorical exclusion instead of an environmental assessment for the Keller Ferry Marina houseboat dock replacement project. They have stated that they will still give consideration to all public comments received during the recent civic engagement period. Source: [Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area](#)
- *Land and Water Conservation Fund* (an NPS-administered program) - On February 27, the Renville County (MN) Board of Commissioners unanimously approved a letter to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for \$35 million in replacement recreation opportunities for the land transfer of Upper Sioux State Park to the Upper Sioux Community. This letter comes after a similar February 13 letter sent by the Yellow Medicine County Board of Commissioners to the Department of the Interior asking them to enforce rules that require land purchased with LWCF grants to make up for equivalent replacement opportunities if the lands are later sold (see [2/21/24 Coalition Report](#)). The park closed on February 16. Source: [West Central Tribune](#)
- *Manhattan Project National Historical Park* - *The Columbian* published [an article](#) about the growth in popularity of the Hanford Unit of the park since the movie "Oppenheimer" was released. The site will close its tours starting in July to make repairs to the B Reactor, including a new roof, new mortar between the reactor's masonry blocks, an updated electrical system, and a "semi-permanent restroom." Source: *The Columbian*
- *Manhattan Project National Historical Park* - The park recently published virtual tours of T Plant and B Reactor at the Hanford Unit and X-10 Graphite Reactor and Y-12 Pilot Plant (Building 9731) at the Oak Ridge Unit. Source: [Manhattan Project National Historical Park](#)
- *Mississippi National River and Recreation Area* - On February 21, the Cottage Grove



(MN) City Council approved a proposal to build 377 new homes on the former Mississippi Dunes Golf Course, which is within the boundary of the park. Superintendent Matthew Blythe had previously submitted comments that expressed concerns about sensitive species, visitor viewsheds, and native vegetation. Source: [KARE11](#)

- *Mount Rainier National Park* - The park has denied a special use permit to the annual Ride Around Mount Rainier in One Day ("RAMROD") 150-mile bicycle race. The race takes place both inside and outside the park. The NPS cited that the event is no longer a "necessary and appropriate use." This year would have been the 40th anniversary of the event. Source: [Seattle Bike Blog](#)
- *Mount Rushmore National Memorial* - On February 21, the NPS denied a special use permit to the South Dakota Department of Tourism for a fireworks display in the park because it "poses threats to the environment and Memorial resources" and multiple Tribes believe fireworks to have "an adverse effect on the traditional cultural landscape." Source: [E&E News](#), [National Park Service Freedom of Information Act site](#)
- *Ninety Six National Historic Site* - The park now has an official philanthropic partner, the Friends of Ninety Six National Historic Site. They will host their first membership drive during the annual 96 Crossroads event on April 6. Source: [Ninety Six National Historic Site](#)
- *Olympic National Park* - On March 1, the park will begin a geotechnical drilling project on the North Shore Quinault Road. The drilling will provide information for the design of future road repairs. The project is being executed by Haztech Drilling under a contract with the Federal Highway Administration. "Limited closures" will occur and travelers will not be able to complete the Quinault Road loop drive. The project will take at least a week and weather windows may extend the closures through March 30. Source: [Olympic National Park](#)
- *Olympic National Park* - On March 11, the park began the removal of ten cabins in Kalaloch due to the erosion of the bluff beneath the cabins. The cabins have been closed since January 1. A contractor, 2Grade, is completing the removal. The main Kalaloch Lodge is not currently threatened. Source: [Olympic National Park](#)
- *Rock Creek Park* - *The Eagle*, the American University newspaper, published [an article](#) about the history of Rock Creek Park, including quotes from Joan Zenzen, who recently published an "administrative history" called, "An Urban Oasis: Rock Creek Park's History and Management." Source: *The Eagle*
- *Saguaro National Park* - Some of the climate resilience funding from the Department of the Interior (see "National/Regional NPS Updates" above) will go toward eradicating bullfrogs and reintroducing native frogs to ponds on federal

lands in southern Arizona, including at Saguaro. The funding will also support a new regional fire ecologist for eight national parks and monuments in southeastern Arizona and Texas. Source: [Tucson.com](#)

- *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - On February 23, a group of retired NPS staff submitted a letter to Interior Secretary Deb Haaland asking her to take action against NPS Director Chuck Sams, arguing that his November 2023 signing of a Finding of No Significant Impact for the take of a bald or golden eagle from the park by the Jemez Pueblo. The letter alleges that the action was illegal because it took place with no public review or consultation with other Tribes and runs counter to several regulations and internal policies. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#) [Editor note: In a November National Parks Traveler [article](#), former Coalition Chair Mike Murray noted the action could be precedent-setting and also expressed concern at the lack of public comment and Tribal consultation.]
- *Vicksburg National Military Park* - *Military.com* published [an article](#) about the park's efforts to better honor the legacy of Black Union soldiers during the Civil War. Source: *Military.com*
- *White Sands National Park* - A new study published in the journal *Environmental Research* shows that wild birds and mammals in the area around Holloman Lake were found to have "exceptionally high concentrations" of polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). The lake is part of a system of wastewater catchment ponds for the Holloman Air Force Base and is located adjacent to White Sands. PFAS are known to cause cancer and a number of developmental, reproductive, endocrine, and immune system issues in animals and people at relatively low concentrations. The leading cause of contamination is thought to be fire-fighting foam used for several decades by the Air Force. The foam has "since been phased out of manufacturing." Source: [Phys.org](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - The University of Arizona Press published a new book, *Pyrocene Park: A Journey into the Fire History of Yosemite National Park*, by Stephen J. Pyne. Source: [The Western Historical Quarterly](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - On February 29, the National Park Foundation announced a \$40 million donation to build 70 new modular units for NPS employee housing at the park. The gift is being provided by "donors who wish to remain anonymous." Source: [PR Newswire](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - New research by park scientists and the University of Wisconsin-Madison shows that the snowpack in the park has declined due to climate change and may result in a longer wildland fire season, significant changes to ecosystems, and water shortages for downstream communities. Source: [Laramie Boomerang](#)

## Personnel Changes

- *Appalachian National Scenic Trail* - Ed Clark was selected as the new superintendent. He has worked for the NPS for 36 years, most recently as a senior program analyst at the Pacific West Region and acting superintendent at Mojave National Preserve. Source: [Cardinal News](#)
- *Arches National Park, Canyonlands National Park, Hovenweep National Monument, Natural Bridges National Monument* - Lena Pace was selected as the new superintendent. Lena has many years of NPS experience (and grew up with two parents who worked for the NPS), most recently as the chief of the newly established Office of Public Trust. She will begin her new role April 7. Source: [Canyonlands National Park](#)
- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area* - Rich Sweeting was selected as the new chief of facilities management. Rich has four years of NPS experience, most recently as a project manager at Shenandoah National Park. He is a recent graduate of the NPS Facility Manager Leaders Program. Source: [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#)
- *Lassen Volcanic National Park* - Roseann "Rose" Worley was selected as the new superintendent. Rose has worked for the NPS for many years, most recently as the Pacific West Region's internal controls program lead and acting superintendent at Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area. Source: [NPS Regions 8, 9, 10, and 12 \(Pacific West Region\)](#)

## 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

- Marie Cazier, 93, passed away on February 15. Marie and her husband Clyde worked for a time at the Jackson Lake Lodge in Grand Teton National Park during their retirement. Source: [Legacy/Memorial Lakeview Mortuary and Cemetery](#)
- Robert DiCristina, 72, passed away on February 28. In his retirement, Robert worked summers in Yellowstone with his wife, Kelly. Source: [Orlando-News.com](#)
- Edward Nestestu Stondall, 94, passed away on February 12. Edward worked for the NPS for many years, including as an engineer at Olympic National Park and on a task force that supporting the creation of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act that added "approximately 44 million additional acres to the parks." Source: [Enterprise-Record](#), [Anchorage Daily News](#)

- Ann Reid Whittier Walquist, 91, passed away on December 1. Ann spent her college summers "working at the lodge at Mt. Rainier National Park." Source: [Daily Breeze](#)

### **Retired (or soon to be)**

- On February 24, a retirement celebration was held for Judy Forte, who was the superintendent at Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park for the last 17 years. *SaportaReport* published [an article](#) about her career. Source: *SaportaReport*
- Laurel Rematore, CEO of Smokies Life (the primary park partner to Great Smoky Mountains National Park), announced that she will retire at the end of 2024. Laurel previously worked for "organizations supporting Yosemite National Park...and Mesa Verde National Park." Source: [Smoky Mountain News](#)
- Mike Reynolds, the NPS deputy director of external and congressional affairs, will retire on March 22. Mike worked for the NPS for 39 years. Source: [E&E News](#)

### **In the News**

- On February 26, Jerry Bransford gave a presentation at the Roots 101 Museum in Louisville, Kentucky, celebrating his family's five-generation legacy of guiding tours through Mammoth Cave, both before and after it became a national park. Source: [WHAS11](#)

### **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](#)
- *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](#)
- *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](#)

- *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](#)
- *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](#)
- *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](#)
- *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](#)
- *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* - 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**

- *Court rules in favor of mine over Apache group* - On March 1, a federal court ruled 6-5 in favor of a proposed copper mine on Oak Flat in the Tonto National Forest, denying the challenge by a group called Apache Stronghold that claimed religious and treaty rights to the area. Due to the heavily split nature of the court's decision, it is likely to be appealed to the Supreme Court. Source: [Los Angeles Times](#)
- *USFWS asserts Okefenokee water rights* - On January 31, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service submitted a letter to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division stating that the current proposal to issue mining permits 3 miles from the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge could disrupt the natural flow of groundwater in the whole area, and that any decision "must be made with consideration of federal reserved

water rights." Federal water rights take precedence over other users, per a 1908 Supreme Court decision. The draft permits currently are open for public comments.

Source: [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#)

- *\$119 million for conservation projects* - On February 26, the Department of the Interior launched the application process for the American the Beautiful Challenge, which provides funding for landscape-scale conservation and restoration projects that implement existing conservation plans. The 2024 process is expected to award \$119 million in grants. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$50 million for orphaned wells* - On February 22, the Department of the Interior announced \$50.5 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding to address oil and gas wells in 123 locations on federal 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**

Public Law 118-40, Extension of Continuing Appropriations and Other Matters Act, 2024. Extends funding for the following through March 8:

- the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023;
- the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023;
- the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023; and
- the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023.

For most other federal agencies and programs, the Continuing Resolution provides funding through March 22, 2024.

#### **Senate Actions**

**February 29** – The Senate agreed to H.R. 7463, Extension of Continuing Appropriations and Other Matters Act, 2024.

#### **House Actions**

House was in recess from February 19-27.

**February 28** – The House introduced and passed H.R. 7463, Extension of Continuing

Appropriations and Other Matters Act, 2024 which extended funding for the government through March 8 for some agencies and through March 22 for others as outlined in P.L. 118-40 discussed above.

## **Incidents**

*Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.*

### **Antietam National Battlefield, Monocacy National Battlefield Deer with Chronic Wasting Disease**

On March 5, the NPS announced that two white-tailed deer at Antietam and one at Monocacy tested positive for Chronic Wasting Disease. They are the first CWD-positive detections in national park units in Maryland. The deer were culled and sampled for disease as part of regular deer reduction operations in National Capital Area parks.

Source: [National Park Service Region 1: National Capital Area](#)

### **Cape Hatteras National Seashore Boating fatality**

On March 4, a 35-foot boat capsized "somewhere near Oregon Inlet." It was later found near Pea Island. The captain and their dog were found deceased onshore nearby. One other occupant was aboard the vessel and a search for them is still underway, as of March 5. Agencies involved in the investigation, search, and recovery are the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, North Carolina Marine Fisheries, Dare County (NC) Sheriff's Office, and the U.S. Coast Guard. Source: [The Outer Banks Voice](#)

### **Denali National Park and Preserve Illegal moose kill**

On February 21, a federal judge accepted a plea agreement from two individuals for a misdemeanor count of unlawful transport of illegally taken wildlife, related to an incident in Denali in September 2021. The two individuals, both now 42-years-old, were hunting in the Dry Creek area when one shot and killed a bull moose inside the park boundary. It is prohibited in the national park part of Denali and allowed in the preserve areas. The individuals salvaged some of the meat and took the skull outside the park boundary to prepare it for a mount. Three other groups of hunters reported the illegal kill to park officials. Park staff instructed the individuals to pack the moose out, as required by law, but they did not comply. They stated that they attempted to, but were confronted by another hunter and then decided to leave when they found that bears had disturbed the carcass. The two individuals were sentenced with a four-year global ban on hunting, four years of probation, and a total of \$20,000 fines and park restitution fees. Source:

[Anchorage Daily News](#)

### **Fort Greble Park (National Capital Parks - East)**

## **Homicide**

On February 16, a 29-year-old was found deceased of gunshot wounds in the park. The individual lived less than a half-mile from the park. The death is being investigated as a homicide. Police said they do not know when the individual was shot or if they were shot inside the park. Source: [The Washington Post](#)

## **Golden Gate National Recreation Area**

### **Alcatraz tour operator bankruptcy**

On February 21, Hornblower Group, which runs Alcatraz City Cruises, the official tour and ferry concessioner for Alcatraz, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. The CEO stated that the bankruptcy was related to substantial debt caused by the pandemic, particularly with cruises in other locations. A restructuring plan is underway to inject new capital into the company, and they expect to "emerge from bankruptcy in about four months." Despite the announcement, the company stated that operations at Alcatraz are "running normally and without interruption." The company's 15-year concession contract began in 2019. Source: [The San Francisco Standard](#)

## **Haleakalā National Park**

### **"Hard landing" of helicopter**

On February 19, a commercial helicopter made a hard landing in the Kīpahulu area of the park. Two people were on board. Neither was injured in the landing, and both declined being taken to the hospital. The helicopter was unable to take back off. Source: [KITV/Island News](#)

## **Hot Springs National Park**

### **Damaged water line**

On February 26, the thermal jug fountain at the Libbey Memorial Physical Medicine Center was closed due to a damaged water line. It will be closed indefinitely until it can be repaired. Source: [KATV](#)

## **Natchez Trace Parkway**

### **Hit-and-run**

On February 25, a dark colored Buick Enclave was involved in a collision near Pharr Mounds at milepost 286.7. The driver fled the scene without stopping, heading northbound. The NPS is asking the public for any information they might have. *[Editor note: The press release made no mention what the car collided with, but a picture in the release indicates that one other car was possibly involved in the incident.]* Source: [Natchez Trace Parkway](#)

## **Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore**



## **Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Outbreak**

On March 1, the park closed the Old Indian Trail and the surrounding area due to the presence of invasive hemlock woolly adelgid. The closure will allow the park to treat the area. The park hopes to reopen the trail in the fall. Source: [Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore](#)

## **Yosemite National Park**

### **Winter storm closure**

On March 1 at midnight, the park closed due to predictions of a heavy winter storm, including many feet of snow and high-intensity winds. It reopened on March 4, reporting "as much as 45 inches of snow in some areas and high winds that toppled trees." Source: [USA Today](#), [Yosemite National Park](#), [Los Angeles Times](#)

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

- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - On February 22, the *Daily Press* published [an article](#) about the ongoing closure at Buxton Beach. It has been closed since September 1 due to contamination uncovered during Tropical Storm Idalia in August 2023 (see [9/6/23 Coalition Report](#)). Cleanup has been delayed because the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been unable to find a source of petroleum at the site to be able to confirm that the contamination is associated with former Navy activity. On March 4, the Dare County (NC) Board of Commissioners unanimously adopted a resolution requesting "immediate action" for clean-up from the U.S. Coast Guard, Environmental Protection Agency, NPS, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper, local U.S. legislators, and the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality. A public health advisory recommends avoiding swimming, wading, or fishing in the area until the soils are mitigated and it is declared safe. Anecdotal reports by visitors indicate that petroleum can be seen and smelled on the water a half-mile away, particularly during high tide. Source: *Daily Press*, [The Virginian-Pilot](#)
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - The Sequoia Parks Conservancy announced that Crystal Cave will remain closed through the 2024 season due to the damage sustained to the road, trail, and visitor facilities during the 2021 KNP Complex wildfires and early 2023 winter weather. They hope to reopen the cave in 2025. Source: [YourCentralValley.com](#)
- *Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore* - A federal court judge ruled in favor of Riverside Canoes to allow them to continue operations on the Platte River without a commercial use authorization due to a 1992 agreement with the NPS that protects their rights. The business had been told in 2022 that they would need a CUA to continue operating, including the payment of 3-5% of revenue to the NPS (see [4/26/23 Coalition Report](#)). Source: [BNN](#)

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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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