



The Coalition Report

Wednesday, September 16, 2026

The Coalition has opened [nominations](#) for the George Hartzog Award, for an individual or group that demonstrates outstanding support for the mission of the National Park Service or National Park System. Past award recipients can be seen [here](#).

Make a nomination

Coalition Actions

The Coalition submitted [a letter](#) to Interior Secretary Doug Burgum arguing that the national parks are in crisis and opposing against reorganization of the National Park Service.

We joined several unions, non-profits, cities, and counties in [filing a lawsuit](#) against the Department of Agriculture for its unlawful reorganization of the department. Employees have already been forced to choose between relocation or the loss of their jobs.

The Coalition joined 10 other conservation groups in [requesting a public hearing](#) for proposed land exchanges at Cumberland Island National Seashore, arguing that U.S. code requires it.

We joined three other groups in submitting [comments](#) on the Bureau of Land Management New Mexico Office First Quarter 2027 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale, urging it to defer parcels within 10 miles of Carlsbad Caverns National Park due to interconnected cave systems and groundwater contamination.

The Coalition joined six other organizations in submitting [a letter](#) to the Missouri Department of

Natural Resources urging it to withdraw the Missouri Regional Haze Plan for the Second Planning Period for failing to reduce air pollution and adequately regulate polluting facilities.

Our staff and Executive Council continue to provide statements and interviews to the media highlighting challenges to the National Park System. Recent work includes:

- [‘Stop the Bulldozers’: Inside Trump’s war on America’s public lands](#), *MS Now*
- [Trump is quietly planning to majorly change how national parks are run](#), *The Washington Sun* (formerly *NOTUS*)
- [Could another shake-up be coming for national parks? Former superintendents are worried](#), *WRLN*
- [Yosemite belongs to the American people - not private developers](#), press release by Coalition Executive Council member Don Neubacher (and reported in [ABC News](#), [KQED](#), [USA Today](#), [PoliticoPro](#))
- [More logging and mining near Grand Canyon? Trump plan to repeal roadless rule raising alarms](#), *Cronkite News*
- [DOGE directive spurs proposed changes to national park e-bike rules](#), *GearJunkie*
- [Flash floods shaping America’s national story](#), *NPR*
- [California’s wild forests need protection - not more roads](#), *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, op-ed by Coalition Member Woody Smeck
- [Stand up for Arizona’s national monuments](#), *Tucson.com*, op-ed by Coalition Member Rob Arnberger

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.

- *Proposed 32% cut* - A Congressional Research Service report found that the Trump administration’s proposed Fiscal Year 2027 budget seeks to fund the NPS at \$2.206 billion in discretionary funding, a 32% cut from Fiscal Year 2026. The NPS would also receive \$11.757 billion in mandatory appropriations, an increase of \$10 billion over FY26, with that increase going entirely to a Presidential Capital Stewardship Program for construction and beautification projects in and around Washington, DC. Source: [Legis1](#)
- *Possible reorganization* - There continue to be signs of an impending reorganization of the National Park Service, including recent efforts to call superintendents across the country to in-person meetings at regional offices the week of September 14 (which were later canceled). The memo for those meetings stated that attendance was mandatory, and that the meetings would be used “to discuss agency priorities, our FY 2027 outlook, and other matters important to the work ahead.” The meetings were unusual, given that NPS work travel has been largely prohibited under the Trump administration. Draft internal agency planning documents about reorganization have also been floated among leadership and leaked to the press anonymously. They outline a new “hub and spoke” model, with hub parks managing priorities for spoke parks, weakening the direction of regional leadership.

In August, about 30 Senior Executive Service employees at other Interior Department agencies were reassigned to new roles, “largely outside their areas of expertise.” Source: *The Washington Sun (formerly known as NOTUS)* ([9/2](#), [9/8](#))

- *\$25 million for park projects denied* - The Department of the Interior has reportedly denied agreements for 130 projects at parks across the country, representing \$25 million in federal funding. These projects were said to be in cooperation with groups “actively working against the best interests of the American people and the priorities of this administration.” Source: [The Hill](#)
- *NPF supports workforce housing* - On September 4, the National Park Foundation announced the award of \$6.9 million to “accelerate and expand workforce housing solutions across 17 national parks.” \$5 million will go toward nine projects providing housing for more than 50 staff, volunteers, and partners, while remaining funds will support planning and design. Source: [PR Newswire](#)
- *International fees generate \$22.5 million* - The Department of the Interior announced that the increase in fees for international visitors at national parks has generated \$22.5 million since January 1. The fee increase originally was slated to bring in \$90 million over the course of the first year. Source: [SFGate](#)
- *Interview with Will Shafroth* - The Harvard Kennedy School published [an interview](#) with Harvard alumnus and recently-retired National Park Foundation CEO Will Shafroth about the state of national parks. Source: *Harvard Kennedy School*
- *Concessioners maximize data tracking and profits* - *Travel and Tour World* published [an article](#) about the ways in which concessioners in national park units have upgraded software and data tracking to maximize spending across its offerings in order to operate in a fixed-price environment. Source: *Travel and Tour World*

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *9/11 Memorial Act Grant Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On September 10, the NPS awarded \$4 million to support the operation of the National September 11 Memorial in New York City, New York, and the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial in Arlington, Virginia. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Anacostia Park* - *HillRag* published [an article](#) outlining ongoing tensions between the National Park Service and local residents of Anacostia Park due to a variety of broken infrastructure. Funding to address maintenance has been secured, but intended timelines have not come to fruition. Source: *HillRag*
- *Canaveral National Seashore* - On August 14, the park announced the completion of a

major historic preservation project to repair damage caused by Hurricane Milton in 2024 at Eldora House, Seminole Rest Main House, and Seminole Rest Caretaker's House. The project was funded by the Fiscal Year 2025 Disaster Supplemental Grant Program, and executed by a Maintenance Action Team from the Historic Preservation Training Center. Source: [Canaveral National Seashore](#)

- *Chesapeake Gateways Grants* (an NPS-administered grant) - On August 27, the application period for Chesapeake Gateways Grants opened. The grants range from \$10,000 to \$50,000, for tourism and event support. They are due by November 4, 2026. Source: [National Park Service: Chesapeake Bay Watershed](#)
- *Crater Lake National Park* - This year, scientists have found zero Mazama newts at survey sites throughout the park. The newt only lives in Crater Lake. It is suspected that an exploding crayfish population in the lake is decimating the population. Source: [SFGate](#)
- *Cumberland Island National Seashore* - On August 28, the NPS issued a Finding of No Significant Impact for a new Visitor Use Management Plan. It amends the 1984 General Management Plan. Source: [Cumberland Island National Seashore](#)
- *Denali National Park and Preserve* - On September 2, the park held a ribbon-cutting for the completion of the 475-foot Pretty Rocks Bridge. The new bridge spans an active landslide near mile 45 of the Denali Park Road, which has been closed at the slide since August 2021. Hikers and cyclists can use the bridge currently, and public bus service to the west end of the road is expected to resume for the 2027 visitor season. The \$230 million project was funded through a combination of federal transportation, disaster supplemental, and infrastructure funding. Source: [Denali National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Fort Smith National Historic Site* - TB&P published [an article](#) about efforts by an individual to rebuild the original fort on Belle Point at the park, utilizing his own funding. The individual has gone to great lengths to research the fort's structure and complete design drawings. The NPS has rejected the project, arguing that the area's history is layered, and that studies in 1974 and 2009 advised against rebuilding the original fort due to lack of definitive designs, existing archaeological resources, and historic preservation laws. Source: *TB&P*
- *Fort Smith National Historic Site* - The park recently published an article about the park's Yosemite Conservation Corps, which repaired mortar on the fort's defensive walls, replaced protective platforms beneath wagons and cannons, refurbished the gallows, and installed new doors on the commissary. The seven-person crew was funded in part by the National Park Foundation. Source: [Fort Smith National Historic Site](#)
- *Indiana Dunes National Park* - On August 29, the park announced the completion of a rehabilitation of the Good Fellow Camp Lodge. The \$25.4 million project was funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [Indiana Dunes National Park](#)

- *Lake Clark National Park and Preserve* - On September 11, the park announced the restoration of an area where a former fuel tank farm stood, adjacent to the visitor center. The project included a new parking area and a new pedestrian trail from the visitor center to existing trails. The project was funded by the National Park Foundation and executed by teams from the Student Conservation Association and a Maintenance Action Team. Source: [Lake Clark National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site* - On September 9, the park will begin a rehabilitation of the historic home including improvements to the interior and exterior, and cleaning of historic artifacts. It will be closed through early 2027. Source: [Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site](#)
- *Mesa Verde National Park, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On July 31, the park announced that it completed an inventory of human remains and associated funerary objects, all of which are now open for repatriation. Source: [Federal Register](#)
- *National Capital Region* - On September 9, the 9/11 Pentagon Memorial was designated as an Affiliated Area of the National Park System via an MOU with the U.S. Department of Defense and the Pentagon Memorial Fund, Inc. The 9/11 Pentagon Memorial was established by Congress in 2001, and dedicated in 2008. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - In August, the NPS opened the procurement process for a sea wall rehabilitation project at the East Potomac Golf Course. They invited firms to a presentation and site visit, with plans to solicit proposals this fall. Estimates for the sea wall range between \$500-600 million. The NPS has also published documents suggesting a \$20-49 million contract for construction of a new East Potomac Golf Course would begin in 2027, a project that President Donald Trump has publicly discussed. It is not yet clear whether funding for other NPS maintenance needs will be deferred for either project. Source: [The Washington Post](#)
- *National Natural Landmarks Program* (an NPS-administered program) - The *Irvine Standard* published [an article](#) about the preservation of The Irvine Ranch as a national natural landmark 20 years ago and the effects of that initiative. Source: *Irvine Standard*
- *National Park Service Submerged Resources Center* - The Duke Nicholas School of the Environment published [an article](#) highlighting what their students did over the summer, including Abby Perry, who completed an internship with the NPS Submerged Resources Center. Abby traveled to nine NPS sites, working alongside park dive teams. Source: *Duke University*
- *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On September 9, the NPS published 23 NAGPRA notices in the Federal Register for the intended repatriation of remains and funerary objects currently housed by

institutions in 13 states. Source: [Nature World News](#)

- *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Program* (an NPS-administered program) - *Skeptic* published [an op-ed](#) arguing against the repatriation of human feces and animal scat under the NAGPRA arguing that it will challenge the efficacy of archaeological techniques. Source: *Skeptic*
- *New River Gorge National Park and Preserve* - On September 1, the park began a project to repair the Rend Trail and Bridges. The \$11.8 million project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [New River Gorge National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore* - On September 3, the NPS announced the award of a \$2.8 million contract to McKenzie Construction and Site Development, LLC, to repair and replace the Munising Falls Trail and improve accessibility at the lower Munising Falls overlook. The trail was heavily damaged during a rainstorm in April 2025. The project is expected to be complete at the end of 2027. Source: [Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore](#)
- *San Antonio Missions National Historical Park* - A former Brooks Air Force Base hangar, is undergoing a \$7.5 million renovation to become the park's headquarters. It will be leased from the General Administrative Services to the NPS under 17-year contract for a cost of \$30 million. Source: [Yahoo!news](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - *Cowboy State Daily* published [an article](#) about Morning Glory Pool and how its color has changed over time due to trash historically thrown into it. Source: *Cowboy State Daily*
- *Yosemite National Park* - The Trump administration is considering a land swap of a quarter-mile-long strip of land to allow for a road connecting a private 83-acre parcel known as the Hazel Green Ranch to Highway 120 in the park, in exchange for a to-be-determined parcel "somewhere in California." This proposed shortcut would cut up to an hour off the parcel's driving access to Yosemite. The previous owners also attempted to get this concession, and were ultimately blocked by courts. A spokesperson for the NPS stated that "no final decisions have been made" and any land exchange "would be subject to all applicable federal laws, regulations, and Departmental policies, including required environmental review and public notification processes." Land exchanges are common for federal public land agencies, but they usually begin with the agency identifying a piece of land it wants to add to its inventory. The realty company that owns the private parcel includes individuals connected to President Donald Trump. Anonymous NPS staff stated "the political pressure being brought to bear is very unusual." Source: [The Washington Sun](#) (formerly known as NOTUS)
- *Yosemite National Park* - On September 5, a new documentary, "High Ground," about the 1976 crash at Lower Merced Pass Lake of a plane carrying thousands of pounds of marijuana, premiered at Yosemite Cinema in Oakhurst, California. Source: [San Francisco Chronicle](#)

- *Yosemite National Park* - A Washington State University survey of 1,203 visitors between August 7-16 found that 96% of visitors rated their recreational experience in Yosemite as “good or excellent,” and 91% reported a wait of less than 15 minutes to enter the park. Additionally, 56% said they spent less time looking for parking than they expected, while 11% said finding parking took “somewhat or much too” long. Source: [Yosemite National Park](#)
- *Zion National Park* - On August 26, the Zion Forever Project (the park’s non-profit philanthropic partner) announced the finalization of a conservation easement to protect 145 acres next to the east entrance of the park, preventing development along that stretch. Source: [Utah News Dispatch](#)

Legal Actions

Legal actions involving the National Park Service. If the Coalition is involved in a lawsuit, those will be recorded in “Coalition Actions” above. Listed alphabetically, except for items affecting the entire NPS, which are listed on top.

- *Bears Ears National Monument, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments* (both administered by the Bureau of Land Management) - The Natural Resources Defense Council, Earthjustice, and Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance have initiated a lawsuit to challenge presidential proclamations reducing the two monuments on July 13, arguing that the Antiquities Act allows for the creation of national monuments, but not the reduction. This suit reactivates litigation against President Donald Trump’s 2017 monument reductions (which were overturned by President Joe Biden). Source: [Earthjustice](#) [Editor note: Both Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante are national monuments administered by the Bureau of Land Management rather than the NPS. However, this lawsuit could have significant impacts on national monuments managed by the NPS.]
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - On September 4, a federal district judge ordered the Trump administration to give 48 hours’ notice before engaging in any site work for the proposed triumphal arch adjacent to Arlington National Cemetery. The project is also under an order to provide 14 days’ notice before starting construction. The project does not yet have final approval from the National Capital Planning Commission and has not undergone mandatory reviews around aviation safety and historic preservation. On August 28, the NPS released a report stating they would endeavor to “mitigate or minimize the harms” associated with the project, despite dozens of adverse effects on other park sites. Source: [The Daily Record](#), [NPR](#), [USA Today](#)
- *The White House and President’s Park* - On August 31, the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 to override an injunction on the construction of the White House ballroom project, arguing that the National Trust for Historic Preservation likely lacks legal standing. The ruling was clear that it was not determining whether the construction is legal and within the President’s power. However, it will likely be a moot point by the time it is resolved, with

construction likely to be completed by that time. CNN published [an analysis](#) of the court's decision. Source: [Politico](#), [CNN](#)

- *Yellowstone National Park* - On September 14, the State of Montana moved to dismiss its lawsuit against the park for its 2024 bison management plan. The park is expected to release a draft supplemental environmental impact statement that “could shift or maintain the direction of Yellowstone’s bison management plan.” Source: [National Parks Conservation Association](#)

Personnel Changes

- *Castillo de San Marcos National Monument, Fort Matanzas National Monument* - Angelina Alvino was selected as the new superintendent. Angelina has over 25 years of NPS experience, most recently as superintendent of Buck Island Reef National Monument, Christiansted National Historic Site, and Salt River Bay National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve. She began her new role on August 23. Source: [Castillo de San Marcos National Monument](#)
- *El Malpais National Monument, El Morro National Monument* - Brinnen Carter was selected as the new superintendent. Brinnen has 28 years of NPS experience, most recently as integrated resource manager at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Curecanti National Recreation Area. He will begin his new role on October 4. Source: [El Malpais National Monument](#)
- *Fort Pulaski National Monument* - On September 1, James Crutchfield was selected as the new superintendent. James has over 15 years of NPS experience, most recently as park manager of Dry Tortugas National Park. Source: [Fort Pulaski National Monument](#)
- *Harry S Truman National Historic Site* - James Raftery was selected as the new superintendent. James most recently worked as the chief of railroad operations at Steamtown National Historic Site. He will begin his new role on September 20. Source: [Harry S Truman National Historic Site](#)

Park People

Deceased

- Betty Louise (Alexander) Alex, 76, passed away on August 11. Betty worked for the NPS at Big Bend National Park, from 1980 through the 2000s, as a “ranger activities clerk” and a Geographic Information Systems specialist. Source: [Big Bend Sentinel](#)
- Arthur “Art” Clyde Hathaway, 93, passed away on July 10. Art worked for the NPS for many years, including time at Muir Woods National Monument and Joshua Tree National Park. Source: [Legacy/Spokesman-Review](#)

- Margaret Susan “Sue” Bushey Howell, 89, passed away on August 14. Sue worked in Rocky Mountain National Park at age 20, “selling pies at the top of Trail Ridge Road.” Source: [The Denver Post](#)
- Chris Jones passed away on August 19. Chris worked for the NPS as a historical architect for 38 years, including 23 with the Denver Service Center and 15 with the Intermountain Region. Source: *NPS Denver Alumni Newsletter*
- Brian Rene Knight, 66, passed away on September 7. Brian worked for the NPS in facilities at Yellowstone National Park from 2006 to 2008. Source: [KSAL](#)
- Michael James O’Donoghue, 71, passed away on August 23. Michael worked for the NPS at Boston National Historical Park for a time. Source: [Legacy/Nichols Funeral Home - Wilmington](#)
- Michael Pelton, 86, passed away recently. Michael spearheaded important black bear research from the 1960s through 1999 in Great Smoky Mountains National Park as a professor at the University of Tennessee. Source: [Knox News](#)

Retired

- Kayci Cook Collins is retiring after 43 years of NPS service, most recently as the superintendent of Mesa Verde National Park and Yucca House National Monument. Source: [Mesa Verde Foundation \(Facebook\)](#)
- Cam Sholly is leaving the NPS after 30 years of federal service, most recently as superintendent of Yellowstone National Park. Cam will move on to being the chief operating officer of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Source: [WyoFile](#)

Open for Comment

Items will stay on this list until public comment has closed. Listed alphabetically, except for items affecting the entire NPS, which are listed on top.

- *National Park Service* - Public comment is [open through November 2](#) on a proposal to eliminate some review requirements for bicycle access on roads and trails in national park units. Source: [Federal Register](#)
- *U.S. Forest Service* - Public comment is open [through October 6](#) on a proposal to repeal the “Roadless Rule,” a 2001 policy that prohibits road construction and timber harvesting on over 55 million acres of national forest lands. Source: [Federal Register](#) [Editor note: *Though U.S. Forest Service lands are outside the jurisdiction of the NPS, this rule could have heavy effects on ecosystem continuity and wildland fire management on NPS lands.*]

- *Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site* - Public comment is [open through October 23](#) on alternative concepts for the site. The current structure at the site, built in 1976 on the footprint of the original mid-1800s structure, has had major maintenance and stability issues. Source: [Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site](#)
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - Public comment is [open through September 30](#) on a proposed site management plan for the Linville Falls Area, which was damaged heavily by Hurricane Helene in 2024. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)
- *Canaveral National Seashore* - Public comment is [open through October 4](#) on a Storm Adaptive Management Plan for the Playalinda Beach district. Source: [Canaveral National Seashore](#)
- *Cumberland Island National Seashore* - Public comment is [open through October 16](#) on two voluntary proposed land exchanges on the island. Source: [Cumberland Island National Seashore](#)
- *First State National Historical Park* - Public comment is [open through September 28](#) on a proposal to open bicycle use on 25 miles of designated trails within the Brandywine Valley unit of the park. Source: [First State National Historical Park](#)

Congressional Actions

Reports on legislation, hearings, and new public laws of relevance to the national parks, prepared by Chris Soller, former superintendent of Fire Island National Seashore and legislative specialist for the National Park Service.

New Public Laws

Public Law 119-103, an act making continuing appropriations and extensions for Fiscal Year 2027, was enrolled on September 2, 2026. This is a continuing resolution (CR), keeping funding in place until Congress passes a FY27 spending bill, or until December 11, 2026 (at which point a government shutdown or other CR would need to be put in place). This CR funds most programs and activities at the FY26 levels, with several exceptions that provide funding flexibility or additional appropriations for various programs. The National Park Service would be funded at the levels outlined in The Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2026, except section 444 of that Act, which reallocates unspent infrastructure funds to wildland fire prevention, the Office of Inspector General, and general U.S. Forest Service operations.

Senate Actions

The Senate was on August/Summer recess and did not meet or issue any actions.

House of Representatives

The House was also on recess, but did issue intermittent actions and was in session the week before Labor Day.

August 27

The House filed a report on H.R. 5063, to ensure continuity of staffing at federal beaches. H.R. 5063 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior, if the Secretary determines there is a staffing shortage with respect to a designated swim location, to enter into an agreement with one or more local government agencies to enable lifeguards employed by those local government agencies to (1) adequately staff such designated swim location during normal seasonal operating hours; and (2) ensure visitor safety and provide rescue and first aid services at the designated swim location as necessary. In entering into such an agreement, the Secretary shall ensure that the local government agency providing the lifeguard services is reimbursed for all reasonable costs incurred by the local government agency in carrying out the agreement. Designated swim locations mean a swimming area or swimming beach on lands and waters managed by the National Park Service, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, or the Bureau of Reclamation; and that are typically monitored by federally employed lifeguards during normal seasonal operating hours.

The House filed a report on H.R. 8121 to designate the Christiansted Bandstand at the Christiansted National Historic Site, St. Croix, Virgin Islands, as the “Peter G. Thurland, Sr., Bandstand,” with an amendment.

August 31 - The House agreed to suspend the rules and pass S. 858, the Hershel ‘Woody’ Williams National Medal of Honor Monument Location Act, to authorize the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation to establish a commemorative work on the National Mall to honor the extraordinary acts of valor, selfless service, and sacrifice displayed by Medal of Honor recipients.

September 2 - The Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing on several bills, including:

- H.R. 642, the “Myakka Wild and Scenic River Act of 2025,” to designate the portion of the Myakka River lying within Sarasota County, Florida as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System
- H.R. 5470, the “Route 66 National Historic Trail Designation Act,” to designate Route 66 National Historic Trail, a trail that includes all the alignments of U.S. Highway 66 in existence between 1926 and 1985, extending along a route of approximately 2,400 miles from Chicago, Illinois, to Santa Monica, California. The Route 66 National Historic Trail shall be administered by the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the National Park Service
- H.R. 9269, the “Renewing the African American Civil Rights Network Act,” which would amend Section 308404 of title 54, United States Code, by striking “7 years after the date of enactment of this chapter” and inserting “10 years after the date of the enactment of the Renewing the African American Civil Rights Network Act”
- H.R. 9600, the “Common Sense Act 250 Act of 2026,” to approve the location of a commemorative work for Thomas Paine. Notwithstanding the requirements described in section 8908(b)(1) of title 40, United States Code (commonly known as the “Commemorative Works Act”), the Paine commemorative work shall be located within such Area I

- H.R. 10128, to codify Secretary of the Interior Secretarial Order No. 3434, “Strengthening Coordination with Gateway Communities,” to require every National Park System unit to conduct at least one quarterly coordination meeting with gateway community leaders; park officials to document and consider local input when developing management plans, environmental reviews, visitor-use strategies, and fee proposals; the National Park Service to engage these communities early while developing policies that could affect local access, tourism, or regional economic activity and allow them to shape these policies in the early stages; and require every National Park System unit to designate a Gateway Community Coordinator who serves as a direct point of contact for state, tribal, and local officials to be responsible for facilitating communication, ensuring that community concerns reach decision-makers, and elevating problems requiring regional or national attention
- S. 675, the “Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Act,” which would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to enter into one or more agreements with the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation to provide for a loan to the Foundation from federal agencies under the administrative jurisdiction of the Secretary (including the National Park Service and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service) of historic, educational, artistic, natural, and other museum artifacts and objects, particularly artifacts and objects that are not on display to the public, without monetary consideration, subject to such terms and conditions as the Secretary determines to be necessary for the preservation and exhibition of the artifacts and objects loaned to the Foundation.

Testimony was heard from Chairman Westerman; and Representatives Steube, Downing, Clyburn, Raskin, Vicente Gonzalez of Texas, and McClintock.

September 10 - The House filed a report on H.R. 4931, the “National Park System Long-Term Lease Investment Act,” to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to extend certain leases within units of the National Park System without opening the lease to bidding, with an amendment. The act allows the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the National Park Service, to extend a lease entered into under part 18 of title 36, Code of Federal Regulations (as in effect on January 3, 2025), without complying with the requirements of sections 18.7 or 18.8 of that part, if the lessee entered into the lease not less than 5 years before the date on which the extension takes effect; the lessee is in compliance with the terms and conditions of the lease; and the Director of the National Park Service determines that extending the lease is in the best interests of the administration of the applicable unit of the National Park System.

Other Relevant Department of the Interior News

- *Change in migratory game bird hunting* - On August 27, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service finalized a change to migratory game bird hunting procedures, moving the process from annual federal rulemaking to memoranda. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

Incidents

Listed alphabetically by park/program.

Badlands National Park

Trail hazards

On August 31, the park announced the closure of the Notch Trail and all areas within 100 feet of the trail, saying a section “has become a safety hazard for hikers.” The trail is currently under repair. Source: [Badlands National Park](#)

Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Curecanti National Recreation Area

Mudslide risks

On September 14, the park closed East Portal Road due to the risk of further mudslides. The road had only opened 10 days earlier after a mudslide closed the road in mid-July (see below). The road is closed “until the area is safe for public access.” Source: [Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park](#)

Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park

Aggressive wildlife

On September 15, the park closed the Bluff Trail on Lookout Mountain between Cravens House Trail and the staircase below Point Park due to “reports of aggressive wildlife.” No details were given. Source: [Local 3 News](#)

Congaree National Park

Lost hiker

On September 8, an individual got lost while hiking in the park. Personnel from the NPS and local firefighters, including from Columbia Fire Department, responded to the scene. Due to challenging terrain, responders utilized water assets to safely reach the individual. The individual was extricated from their location and transported back to their vehicle. No injuries were reported. Source: [The State](#)

Grand Canyon National Park

Major flooding

On August 29, a storm caused major flash flooding on Bright Angel Creek. Over 60 people were airlifted from the canyon due to the washout of trail bridges on the North Kaibab Trail. Two individuals were found deceased after the incident, and a third member of their party is still missing. There may be other individuals still missing, as well, but there is no reliable way to determine the number of day hikers who were in the canyon at the time of the flood (initial reports stated there could be as many as 15-20 people missing). As of September 8, the search was ongoing. The North Kaibab Trail, Phantom Ranch, Bright Angel Campground, Silver Bridge, Black Bridge, the South Kaibab Trail below Tip-Off Point, and the Bright Angel Trail below the Tonto Trail are all closed. The Transcanyon Waterline was damaged heavily, leaving the South Rim in

Stage 4 water restrictions, and closing all hotels. On September 8, the NPS stated that water service would be restored in “weeks, not months.” Crews are working to construct a temporary water intake at Bright Angel Creek. An existing Transcanyon Waterline repair contract has been modified to support repair work. Source: [SFGate](#), [People](#), [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

Grand Canyon National Park

Human remains

On September 14, human remains were found near Crystal Rapid. The remains were recovered and sent to the Coconino County (AZ) Medical Examiner’s Office. It is yet unclear whether they belong to the missing individual listed above. Source: [CNN](#)

Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument

Hiker rescue

On August 24, a 63-year-old and 62-year-old attempted to hike to the summit of Mount Trumbull. As daylight faded, they decided to leave the established trail in an effort to take a short-cut to their vehicle. After darkness fell, they realized they were off-course and decided to stay in place, enduring cold temperatures and storms. By the following morning, the 62-year-old was “completely immobilized by severe exhaustion and dehydration.” The other individual hiked down to the vehicle to retrieve water, but then was too depleted to make the return trek. They were able to text their adult child, who alerted emergency dispatchers. An Arizona State police helicopter was able to rescue the individual. Source: [FOX 10](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Injured hiker

On June 5, an individual hiking on the Alum Cave Trail suffered a severe head injury. A Tennessee National Guard helicopter was able to hoist the individual and provide first aid while transporting them to Joint Base McGhee-Tyson. They were then transferred to an ambulance and transported to a local hospital. Source: [Radio NWTN](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Missing person

On August 24, an individual was reported missing, last seen at the Sugarlands Visitor Center on August 22. Their vehicle was found still at the Sugarlands Visitor Center. Park staff and volunteers engaged in a search of the region. On September 1, the individual was confirmed safe outside of the park. The incident is said to be “still under investigation.” No further details were given. Source: *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* ([8/28](#), [8/30](#), [9/1](#))

Isle Royale National Park

Wolf activity

On August 28, the park closed tent and group campsites at Three Mile, Daisy Farm, Moskey

Basin, and Caribou Island due to wolves pawing and digging at tents, and entering tents to drag gear away. Source: [Isle Royale National Park](#)

Isle Royale National Park

Missing hiker

On September 6, a 70-year-old on a nine-day solo backpacking trip from Windigo to Rock Harbor was reported overdue. The individual got rerouted due to backcountry campsite closures (due to aggressive wolf activity; see above), then became lost on an “unmarked trail,” and lost their cell phone and wallet in a marsh. Personnel from the NPS, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan State Police, Keweenaw County (MI) deputies, U.S. Coast Guard, No One Left Behind Canine Search and Rescue, and Minnesota State Patrol Aviation Resources performed an 11-day search, including foot patrols, aviation overflights, and drones. On September 12, sea kayakers sighted the individual in a remote, water-accessible area. They were able to paddle to the area, and the individual walked to meet them. The individual was extricated by helicopter, flown to Marquette Regional Airport, then transported to a local hospital for further care. Source: [The Detroit News](#), [Isle Royale National Park \(Instagram\)](#), [mLive](#), [My UP Now](#)

Olympic National Park

Missing person

On August 31, a 26-year-old went backpacking starting from the Madison Falls Trailhead, intending to spend one night on an off-trail traverse from Boulder Lake to Appleton Pass. On September 2, the individual was reported overdue. A search ensued, utilizing aerial resources, ground teams, drones, and dog teams. As of September 11, the individual had not been found. Source: [KATU](#)

The White House and President’s Park

Construction injury

On September 7, a construction worker suffered “minor injuries” on scaffolding at the White House North Portico. Personnel from D.C. Fire and local EMS crews responded to the scene, and used a ground ladder and litter to bring the individual to the ground. The individual was transported to the hospital. Source: [Hoodline](#)

Voyageurs National Park

Accidental shooting

On September 3, a 40-year-old accidentally shot themselves in the leg while unloading a handgun in their tent at Namakan Lake. Members of their party assisted the individual to the visitor center, where they had enough signal to call 911. The individual was transported to the hospital. Source: [WDIO](#)

Yellowstone National Park

Record amount of trash

The park's geology team did its annual clean-up of trash from thermal features in the park, resulting in a record 20,100 pieces of trash. It included 280 hats, 5,600 rocks and sticks, a snowshoe, and over \$18 in coins. Hats still in wearable condition are washed and donated.

Source: [SFGate](#)

Yosemite National Park

Bear incidents

As of early July, bear damage incidents were up 26% over 2025. There is some speculation that staffing vacancies are the cause of the increase. Source: [SFGate](#)

Yosemite National Park

Rabies

On September 2, the park announced that a dead big brown bat found outside the Curry Village shower house on May 18 has tested positive for rabies. Source: [Yosemite National Park](#)

Wildfires

- *Mount Rainier National Park*
 - On August 7, the Grand Park 2 Fire started in the park about seven miles southwest of Snoquera. The park closed the Sunrise and White River roads and evacuated the Sunrise Visitor Center and White River Campground. As of August 31, the fire was 168 acres and 100% contained. Source: [KING5](#), [The Courier-Herald](#), [Watch Duty](#)
 - On August 22, four new wildfires started in the park along the White River corridor, west of the Grand Park 2 Fire. As of September 5, the Garda Falls Fire was 72.4 acres and 0% contained. As of September 5, the Pigeon Fire was 9 acres and 0% contained. Source: [The News Tribune](#), [Watch Duty](#)
 - On August 25, the West Fork Fire, which started much earlier in the summer, picked up activity. As of September 8, it was 310 acres and 16% contained. Source: [Watch Duty](#)
- *North Cascades National Park, Ross Lake National Recreation Area*
 - On June 24, a series of lightning strikes hit the area, causing several fires north of Little Beaver Creek and west of Ross Lake. Of them, the Luna Fire, located east of Big Beaver Creek and north of McMillan Creek, continues burning. As of September 14, the fire was 7,879 acres and 34% contained. Source: *North Cascades National Park* ([7/27](#), [7/31](#), [8/2](#)), [Inciweb](#)
 - The week of July 12, lightning struck the area east of Ross Lake, igniting the Border 1 and Border 2 Fires. As of September 10, the Border 2 Fire was 22,861 acres and 73% contained. Source: [Whatcom News](#), *North Cascades National Park* ([7/27](#), [7/31](#), [8/2](#), [8/14](#), [8/17](#)), [KING5](#), [Watch Duty](#)
- *Olympic National Park*

- On June 23, a lightning storm moved through the park. On June 24, backpackers reported a fire on “a remote mountain slope” on the west side of the park. As of August 28, the Mount Tom Creek Fire was 69 acres and 75% contained. Source: [Olympic National Park, Watch Duty](#)
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - On August 22, a fire was reported in upper Paradise Valley at the confluence of Woods Creek and the South Fork of the Kings River. As of August 24, the Arrow Creek Fire was 3.5 acres and 100% contained. The cause of the fire is under investigation. Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks \(Facebook\)](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Curecanti National Recreation Area* - On September 4, the East Portal Road reopened for the first time since a mudslide damaged the road in July (see [7/22/26 Coalition Report](#)). Crews cleared the roadways, culverts, drainages, and visitor use areas, allowing for the campground and picnic areas to reopen. The lower walk-in section of the East Portal Campground will remain closed for crews to continue debris removal. [Editor note: On September 14, the road closed again due to the threat of mudslides (see above). It will reopen when it is deemed safe again.] Source: [Curecanti National Recreation Area](#)
- *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - On September 3, the Kahuku Unit reopened to visitors after a major tree removal project, following the heavy storms that hit in August (see [8/28/26 Coalition Report](#)). 4WD is recommended for areas above the Lower Palm Trailhead. Kahuku Road is closed above the boot decontamination station. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - On September 4, the park removed all remaining fishing restrictions on the Firehole, Madison, and Gibbon Rivers due to cooling weather and water temperatures. Closures were first enacted in July, with partial restriction removal in August. 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.

The Coalition to Protect America's National Parks 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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