

The Journal of the Association of National Park Rangers

RANGER

Stewards for parks, visitors & each other

The science and research that protect our resources



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Fall
2025

The science behind the beauty of our parks

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notes

— Melissa DeVaughn

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On the cover: Chris Mather shows some of the stone lithics found on an archaeological dig in Yellowstone National Park. Scientists and researchers play a critical role in discovering, cataloging, collecting, and protecting natural and cultural resources in our national parks. NPS Photo: Jacob W. Frank

IF THOSE OF YOU READING THESE WORDS ARE ANYTHING LIKE me, you likely are reeling from the near-constant stress that is being put upon the National Park Service. Day after day, it seems like there is yet another assault to the institution created to embrace our country's most precious natural and cultural resources. Forced retirements and limited hiring has left the agency hanging on by the proverbial thread –just to provide the most basic of services.

On July 5, ANPR Executive Director Bill Wade sent an email out to our board sharing a CNN interview by ANPR Life Member Bob Krumenaker, who recently retired as Big Bend National Park superintendent. ANPR, by the way, has been at the forefront of this effort, taking part in hundreds of interviews and advocating for this institution in which we believe. Bob's interview is one of many.

That interview helped illustrate the full extent and damage the current administrative cuts are causing to "America's Best Idea."

It's not just about fee stations being closed or visitors' centers having reduced hours. It's not only about the lack of toilets, or the staff to keep them clean. That is what has grabbed the headlines for so long because it's what the public tends to see from the get-go. But in this interview, Krumenaker deftly highlighted the far greater challenges created by a hollowed-out work force.

What happens to the cultural and natural resources that our national parks preserve and celebrate? What happens to the funding that helps researchers and scientists help us better understand these resources?

"The ability of park staff to monitor the condition of natural and cultural resources is probably the worst it's been in 50 years because of the lack of staffing, the lack of travel we have," Krumenaker said of what's happening at Big Bend – and beyond during that interview.

Indeed, the scientists, researchers, and field techs within the NPS must be stymied right now – not to mention interpretive guides and law enforcement rangers; if they must spend their time cleaning toilets because maintenance is limited, then who is keeping animals from being poached, fossils from being carried out in a backpack, researchers from understanding how to mitigate climate change?

So, this month, we tip our hats to the behind-the-scenes science in our parks that help us better understand just how valuable our cultural and natural resources are – and how they inform us about how we humans fit into the equation. You will see a few stories in these pages about this science at work, and maybe better appreciate the depth and breadth of the changes to today's NPS work force.

Meanwhile, also start thinking Rendezvous! We have tried to get this issue of *Ranger* out to you at least three weeks earlier than in past years because we have so much to celebrate! We have some fantastic speakers lined up for Ranger Rendezvous 48 (see pages 16-19), and now, *more than ever*, you should consider attending this year's gathering. Surrounding yourself with like-minded individuals who can commiserate and support is a salve for the soul – and if that's not enough, there's always the time-proven healing properties of an ocean breeze and waves.

Come join us at RR 48 and be part of the solution. Let's support our fellow NPS professionals – and all public-land professionals – who are still working. Let's show them we can make a difference.

See you in the hospitality suite!



— Melissa DeVaughn
Ranger magazine editor

RANGER

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In meeting these purposes, the Association provides education and other training to develop and/or improve the knowledge and skills of park professionals and those interested in the stewardship of national parks; provides a forum for discussion of common concerns of all employees; and provides information to the public.

The membership of ANPR is comprised of individuals who are entrusted with and committed to the care, study, explanation and/or protection of those natural, cultural and recreational resources included in the National Park System, and persons who support these efforts.

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This World Ranger Day, a salute to Rick Smith

President's message

— Rick Mossman

AS I WRITE THIS, I AM VERY SADDENED about the recent passing of Rick Smith. He was one of the original founders of ANPR, the second president, and always an active member. See our tribute to him on Page 6. I worked with Rick on a detail in Washington, D.C., for two months, and we were roomies together at the first World Ranger Congress at Zakopane, Poland. He was an incredibly smart person and deeply dedicated to the idea of national parks around the world. He was a great mentor and a great man. ANPR will miss him.



The last six months have been trying times for the NPS as I'm sure you are aware. More than 24 percent of NPS staff has been fired, retired through coercions, or have left the NPS. This is a major brain drain. We have to stop the bleeding and let the public know that they need to help the NPS. The administration still wants to do more reductions in force (RIFs) and cut the budget by almost a third.

The board of ANPR is working hard to try and stop this attack on the NPS. After the initial Valentine's Day massacre, we put out a press release and ended up doing more than 250 media interviews/responses. We continue to put out press releases. Executive Director Bill Wade has taken on much of this work. In May, Bill and I made a trip to Washington, D.C., to form a coalition with the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), The Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), and the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks. We met for two days and came up with briefing papers and a plan to help fight this administration's plans on gutting the NPS. The goal is to come up with a way to fight the administration's actions and to use the same facts and messaging while doing so. The final report and documentation, which we encourage all of you to read and use, is available at NPCA.org and at our website, www.anpr.org.

Also, ANPR recently distributed information to the public and members encouraging even more participation in World Ranger Day, which was recognized July 31 (See accompanying story on Page 8). Now, more than ever, our rangers need to know they have our support. To further that effort, ANPR is working alongside the Coalition and NPCA to plan activities at various NPS sites on Founder's Day (celebrated this year on Saturday, Aug. 23, 2025). Stay tuned for more details on that in our e-newsletter and on our website.

Finally, and most important, we hope all of you are writing and calling your elected representatives. Now is a time of action to save the NPS from an attempted dismantling by this administration. For those of you still working, do what you can, but also protect yourself. This administration is vindictive toward non-loyalists.

We need to be vigilant to be aware of the possible impending RIFs and budget actions. This new coalition of organizations is trying to do this.

If you have ideas for other actions we can take, please contact us. The ANPR Board is working hard to take care of its members and all employees of the NPS (and rangers in other agencies), and trying to save the first and finest National Park system in the world.

— Rick Mossman
ANPR President

Letters to the Editor

NPS cuts are not sustainable; perhaps a lawsuit will help

My heart hurts from the decisions of the Trump administration to leave our parks understaffed — its as if the administration is saying to our visitors that your park experience is not important.

This cannot remain.

Since the founding of the National Park Service, the nation has respected the work of those protecting and interpreting our treasured parks, historical sites, recreational sites, and wilderness areas.

This administration only knows how to hurt the citizens of our wonderful country. Perhaps it is time for National Park Service employees to show respect for our parks and the people who visit them.

I believe it is time to take the Secretary of the Interior to court.

By limiting the personnel at the parks, the administration is causing potential physical harm to visitors.

It seems that taking this administration to court is one of the only remedies to which they respond.

The visiting public needs to know what is happening to their parks for which their taxes maintain.

You have my permission to use this letter in your magazine. I can not believe that I am alone in wanting this terrible injustice to park personnel and visitors go unanswered.

— Lois Remick, *Retired park historian*

A salute to NPS professionals

Dear National Park People, may I salute you? I know that this is a particularly challenging season of service for you, and while mine is certainly not the only voice crying in the wilderness to acknowledge that (and may even ring a bit hollow in the short view), the option of silence is just not viable to me. So, here we are.

I'm a card-carrying property owner and cherish our parks, monuments, historic sites, and recreation areas. Thank you for making them available to us. In fact, for decades it has been my practice to express my gratitude when I've either coincidentally met or deliberately sought you in our visits — all of you: law enforcement and interpretive rangers, maintenance and administrative personnel, volunteers, and entry gate staff.

Yes, I am indeed one of those geeky tourons that stare with dislocated jaws at The Canyon, geysers, hoodoos, mountaintops, caverns, and battlefield cannons. When I see the looks on the faces of the kids to who you are leading in the Junior Ranger pledge, I cheer for you at least as much as I do for them. And, while I have been known to ask a question you've known was coming, how is it that you are always able to act like I'm the first person who ever asked those things?

All that said, I do hope you remember these two things:

First, THANK YOU. However poor a supplement to your "sunset pay" it is, please do remember my gratitude.

Second, I really do feel like I am, in fact, a property owner and with that credential demand that you continue your worthy, noble, and often courageous work for the sake of our grandkids. We are counting on you. Will you do that, please?

I've been gifted by the friendship of several of your deceased, active duty, and retired fellow National Park Service employees and volunteers. Through them I've learned that you protect the parks from the people, the people from the parks, and the people from each other. When I have had this conversation with your people over the years, the varied responses by several hundred of you looked like this: "Nobody has ever said that to me before." Tears well up (theirs and mine). "I needed to hear that today." "Well, this is what we do." "It's all about your grandkids." "I love this place."

Well, Ranger, these days I'm particularly reminded of the restorative power inherent in our wonderful national properties and the folks who serve us in them, and I believe confidently that we need them, need you, desperately perhaps. We need knowing that they are there on the map, whether or not we have immediate plans or ability to get to them in the flesh.

I confess to violating the rule about taking only photographs and leaving only footprints. The fact is, the memories, sights, sounds (or lack of them), and smells also have gone home with me and have become part of the geography of my life. If walking off with those treasures is a crime, I suppose that you park people are abettors. May I salute you for being partners in it?

Remember those two things I told you. OK?

— Stephen Scarano, *Vista, Calif.*

Save the NPS as it was intended

World Ranger Day is celebrated every July 31. That recognition honors the guardians who are on the front lines to protect our public lands globally, sometimes at the ultimate cost. (*See more on World Ranger Day, pages 8-9*).

Yellowstone is the world's first national park and was established in 1872. This idea, an American invention, to set aside public lands for all people rippled around the world. Today, nearly 100 countries have national parks; many more have some type of protected lands for purposes of research, preservation or enjoyment.

One hundred and fifty-three years later, "America's best idea" is being tossed away. Since January 2025, the current administration has cut the previously approved budget by \$267 million, done away with 24 percent of the permanent staff, shuttered two national training centers, and censored or directed the removal of factual historical information from wayside panels and web pages as it "might be offensive." There are threats to delist sites (let's return Alcatraz to a prison); without regard to the environment, let's place an immigration center in the middle of the Everglades inside Big Cypress National Preserve. The mission of the National Park Service is "to preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values ... for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of this and future generations." With little funding and fewer overworked staff, this has become an impossible task.

No matter your political affiliation, there's no evidence people want to see the world's finest national park system decimated.

Polling shows the NPS has the highest favorability of all federal agencies. The 433 places protected by the NPS are in every state and bring in over \$55 billion to the American economy. Our nation's heritage, its stories and legacy, is recorded within the national park system. On this international World Ranger Day, take a moment to acknowledge the rangers who have dedicated their lives to the protection of these unique public lands. Make a difference by contacting our elected officials to stop the madness and save the national park system as it was intended.

— Lisa Eckert, NPS manager, retired, *Grand Junction, Colo.*

Amending the 'Big, Beautiful Bill'

By Tom Banks

RECENTLY MOVED TO THE RED STATE OF IDAHO, I DECID-
ED it was a good time to write to one of my U.S. senators
to express my concerns about the "Big, Beautiful Bill." I
chose Senator Mike Crapo, the senior senator. Sen. Crapo (pro-
nounced "CRAY-poh") has served in Congress since 1993. With
his seniority, I figured that he might hold sway over some of his
colleagues.

Paradoxically, I have begun to consider myself fortunate to
live in a state where, represented by Republicans, my voice for
"resistance" might have greater effect than if I still lived in a blue
state. Here, perhaps I can provide encouragement to a senator
or representative who might be persuaded to stand up and vote
against some of the current U.S. president's agenda. I sent a mes-
sage, asked for a reply, and received one (shown at right).

All of us are represented by two senators and a member of
Congress who needs to hear from us. Our representatives need to
feel the weight of we, the people — the constituents.

Our democracy is stronger when concerned citizens speak up.
I plan to continue writing to my senators and the member of
Congress who represents me. Let's act together. I implore you to
speak up, add your voice to mine, and together we will make a
giant roar that Congress, and the president, will hear.



*Tom Banks, a former
board member of ANPR
and member since 1986, has
worked as an NPS seasonal
ranger at Olympic, Glacier,
Sequoia/Kings, Denali, Red-
wood, Mount Rainier, North
Cascades, and Rocky Moun-
tain National Parks. Banks,
at left, rangering in Olympic
National Park in 1919.*

The time is now: Own your voice, use your words

WE NEED TO BEGIN WRITING OUR U.S. SENATORS AND
congressional representatives often — a couple of times a
month, perhaps — and not by merely signing petitions or sending
form letters. These are easy to dismiss, because our representatives
know that these are very simple and easy to "forward" with a few
clicks. Instead, I urge folks to take a little time — a half hour — to
compose a letter to your representative on the issues that con-
cern you. Only then, will we have a Congress that stands up to a
president who apparently wants to remove the guardrails of many
of our cherished institutions — including our national parks and
other public lands.

Senator Mike Crapo
From: correspondence_reply@crapo.senate.gov

July 9, 2025

Thomas Banks

Dear Thomas:

Thank you for contacting me regarding the proposed mandatory disposal of public land
in the budget reconciliation bill. Like many Idahoans, I do not support the sale of public
lands to private entities and this provision was ultimately not included in the final version
of the bill.

After weeks of deliberation, H.R. 1, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, passed the U.S.
Senate with my support on July 1, 2025. On July 3, 2025, the U.S. House of
Representatives passed the legislation by a vote of 218-214, and the bill was signed
into law on July 4, 2025, by President Trump.

In your correspondence you specifically raised concerns about provisions in the Senate
reconciliation bill that would have mandated the disposal of federal public lands. On
June 11, 2025, the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources (ENR) Committee
released its legislative text which authorized the disposal of millions of acres of federal
lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service
(USFS) to address housing and community development needs. The initial
proposal required the BLM and USFS to identify parcels of land for sale and dispose a
minimum of 0.5 percent and a maximum of 0.75 percent.

Following significant stakeholder opposition and in accordance with Senate
parliamentary procedure, the proposal was revised to apply only to BLM managed lands
and reduced the required disposal percentage. However, concerns remained, and on
June 28, 2025, the Senate ENR Committee Chairman ultimately withdrew the public
lands provision from the Senate version of the reconciliation bill.

I share your strong interest in protecting our tremendous natural resources, wildlife and
scenic landscapes in a manner that is supported by local stakeholders. Idaho is
fortunate to be home to vast natural resources and landscapes, which provide
innumerable ecological, educational and economic opportunities. Maximizing access to
our public lands remains among my highest priorities in Congress, and I agree with you
that, put simply, public lands should remain public.

While it is vital that Congress works to enact a fiscally responsible budget, it should not
come at the price of selling off the very public lands that define Idaho's way of life. Any
serious attempt to fix budget shortfalls in discretionary programs must consider the full
scope of federal spending that continues to drive our national debt, while not
threatening access to treasured natural resources.

I have long supported responsible land exchanges and transfers that are driven by local
input, public benefit and transparency. In many cases, states and local communities are
better positioned to manage these lands effectively. That is the model I have
consistently supported, one that protects access, reflects the needs of affected
communities, and ensures federal land policy works for the people it impacts most. As
we move through the 119 th Congress, I will continue to support federal land
management policies that empower local decision-making and strengthen rural
economies without undermining the integrity of our public lands.

Again, thank you for contacting me. I appreciate you taking the time to share your
thoughtful observations with me as it is essential for me to know of the concerns of all
Idahoans. Please feel free to contact me in the future on matters of interest to
you. You can also find more information about what is going on in the U.S. Senate as
well as news releases, photos and other items at my Senate
website, <https://www.crapo.senate.gov>.

Sincerely,

Mike

Mike Crapo
United States Senator

MDC:MF

Tom Banks will be part of a panel titled
"Maintaining Balance: Fighting for Parks and
Conservation—While Preserving
Yourself" during Ranger
Rendezvous 48. The panel begins
at 8 a.m., Friday, Oct. 17, 2025.



Also, go to 5calls.org, an easy-to-use app and website that
provides users with a script and phone list to your representatives
and senators. Scroll to "Protect America's National Parks."

Or choose your issues: Ask for legislation to restore funding to
public broadcasting (PBS and NPR), for example. Let's persevere
and not give in. Let us band together and send in our letters and
make phone calls to our congresspeople and senators — regularly.
Don't be silent. Use your freedom of speech. Cast complacency
aside. Make your voice heard. Put it in writing. Let's continue to
cultivate and guide the democracy we have inherited.

Remembering Rick

March 8, 1938–July 16, 2025

FOLLOWING A LONG ILLNESS, **RICHARD B. “RICK” SMITH, 87**, died July 16, 2025. Rick is well known in the ANPR family for his legendary, 30-year career in the National Park Service, and also for his vital work to support the efforts of international rangers, especially in Latin America. Last fall, Rick received the highest award of the International Ranger Federation – the Gordon Miller Lifetime Achievement Award – during the 10th World Ranger Congress in Hyeres, France. ANPR President Rick Mossman accepted the award on Smith’s behalf, and later in the winter, his peers and friends joined Smith for a celebration at his home in Tucson, Ariz.

“I worked with Rick Smith on a detail in Washington D.C., for two months once,” Mossman said. “We lived in the same apartment building and would go out to eat dinner together. We would have friendly, spirited debates over park issues. I could never win one of those debates – Rick was too smart and far more eloquent than me at debating. But I sure learned a lot. Much later, I found out he had a degree in philosophy. He was a great mentor.”

Smith was one of the original founders and second president of ANPR. Besides his work with the NPS in this country, Rick also consulted and helped guide management in the national parks of every Central American and South America country except Venezuela. He leaves a legacy for the U.S. *and* the world.

Rick obtained a bachelor’s degree from Albion College and a master’s degree from Michigan State University. He taught middle school for six years and worked as a seasonal park ranger in Yellowstone National Park during the summer months. Rick joined the Peace Corps in 1968 and became an Instructor at the University of Ascension in Paraguay. Upon returning to the United States, Rick followed his passion, leaving teaching and making rangers his career, from which he retired after 30 years.

Rick was a ranger in Yellowstone and Yosemite national parks; instructor at the Albright Ranger Training Center in Grand Canyon National Park; legislative affairs specialist in the Washington, D.C., coordinating national park legislation with Congress; superintendent of Fredericksburg Battlefield; manager of a Special Task Force in Alaska to protect newly created national monuments; assistant superintendent of Everglades National Park; associate regional director of Park Operations for the Mid-Atlantic Region; superintendent of Carlsbad Caverns and Guadalupe national parks; associate regional director of Park Operations and Cultural Resources for the Southwest Region; and finally, his last assignment was in 1994 as acting superintendent of Yellowstone National Park.

“Aside from being a close friend since 1978, Rick was one of my mentors,” said ANPR’s Executive Director Bill Wade. “On numerous occasions I would seek advice from him about issues or dilem-



Rick Smith, during his Peace Corps days.



Rick Smith, center, seated, with those who worked together at Yosemite National Park. The photo was taken during the 2022 Ranger Rendezvous in Tucson, Ariz. Photo: Bill Wade

mas I was facing as a park manager and a trainer. He never failed to give me excellent advice and counsel. We had a great partnership as we worked together, and with others, managing and contributing to ANPR, to CPANP, and in NPS training and development of employees. I will miss him every day from now on.”

Upon retirement, Rick’s rich experience and proficiency in Spanish led him to become a much sought-after consultant in Latin American countries on national park management, natural resources protection and ranger training. He consulted in every Latin American country except Venezuela through such organizations as Aid for International Development, World Bank, Food and Agricultural Organization, and more.

Throughout his career and afterward, Rick remained dedicated to the protection of the National Park System and the development of park rangers. He was a leader and an inspiration to all. In 1977, he and several other National Park Service rangers founded the Association of National Park Rangers (ANPR), and he became its second president. They created this organization to encourage and increase communication and share expertise among fellow park rangers.

Upon the formation of the International Ranger Federation (IRF), Rick immediately joined and later became president. With his many contacts in Latin America, Rick worked with the Latin rangers to create organizations and join the IRF. He then found funding for some to attend the World Ranger Congresses. When national park lands were threatened by Federal administration decisions in 2003, Rick and two other influential park rangers formed the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees (now Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks). This organization provides a powerful voice for those who care deeply about the well-being and future of the National Park System. Rick, again, became their second president.

“To write a quote is more difficult than to write a page sometimes,” wrote Phil Francis, chairman of the Executive Council for the Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks. “That is certainly true remembering Rick Smith. A ranger’s ranger, one of the founders and Chair of the Coalition of National Park Retirees, a mentor and friend to many, Rick will long be remembered. I can still hear him bark out, ‘Well Now!’ and ‘Good Stuff’ whenever he was pleased. His laugh was contagious, and his enthusiasm was too. A strong believer in resource protection, the mission of the NPS, and the ranger profession worldwide, Rick was a leader and champion of parks.”

In 2005, Rick became one of the founding board members of

Paso Pacifico, whose mission was to restore and protect the endangered dry tropical forest and coastal ecosystems of Mesoamerica's Pacific Slope. He started a Turtle Ranger Program in Nicaragua by providing some innovative ways to protect turtles and their eggs. He trained new rangers to prepare them for the task. Rick proposed a Junior Ranger Program and arranged airplane flights for the rangers to view their resources.

Rick was admired and appreciated by all who worked with and for him. From his alma mater, Albion College, Rick received the "Distinguished Alumni Award" in 2006 for his excellence in career achievements, contributions to community and humanity, and service to the college.

Throughout his career, the organizations he served presented him with numerous awards. Before retiring from the National Park Service, Rick earned the "Meritorious Service Award" from the U.S. Department of the Interior for his outstanding contributions in park management. Rick was given the Association of National Park Rangers (ANPR) "President's Award" in 2003, recognizing his dedication and outstanding contributions to ANPR. He was given "The 1872 Award" from the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks in 2020 for his continued work for the Coalition and dedication to protecting the



Rick Smith receiving his IRF Award from ANPR President Rick Mossman. Photo: Kendra Balasz

national parks and public lands through his administration of the Park Lands Watch site. And in 2024, came the IRF's Gordon Miller Award.

In addition to a lifetime of service protecting America's and the world's public lands, Rick enjoyed everything those lands had to offer. He loved to ski, scuba dive, raft rivers, and play golf. He also contributed a quarterly book review to *Ranger* magazine for years, exploring the works of ranger-writers and NPS-themed books.

Rick with his wife of 45 years, Kathy, traveled across the United States, Canada, and Mexico in their camper and chartered sailboats from ports worldwide, with Rick as captain.

Known for his generous spirit, commitment to national parks and the NPS, thirst for adventure and love for family

and friends, Rick was one of a kind and will be missed by all.

There will be a Celebration of Life for Rick in Grand Canyon National Park in the fall. More details to follow soon.

Besides Kathy, Rick is survived by his brother Bill Smith (Kim) of Coldwater, Mich.; nephew Eric Smith (Sandy) of Louisville, Colo.; niece Julie Walker (Ben) and grandnieces Emma and Ellen of Muscle Shoals, Ala. He was predeceased by his parents, Mary and William Smith, brother Phil Smith and sister-in-law Kitty Smith.

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World Ranger Day participants gathered for a group photo during a ceremony held July 31, 2025, at the newly renovated historic Cayucas Vet's Hall in Cayucas State Beach, near Morro Bay, Calif. Photo: Courtesy Jamie Edwards

A celebration of World Ranger Day 2025

By Jamie Richards

ESTABLISHED BY THE INTERNATIONAL RANGER FEDERATION (IRF), World Ranger Day has been celebrated on July 31 every year since 2006. World Ranger Day both celebrates the work rangers do to protect the planet's natural treasures and cultural heritage. It's also a day to honor and remember all the rangers around the globe who were seriously injured or killed in the line of duty over the past year.

This year, a special World Ranger Day celebration was hosted in California on July 31, 2025. Members of ANPR were among the 73 rangers and other members of the public who represented 23 different agencies, a university, an NGO, and four ranger associations who gathered to commemorate the day. San Luis Obispo County Parks & Recreation was the host of this year's celebration, which took place at the newly renovated historic Cayucas Vet's Hall in Cayucas State Beach, near Morro Bay, Calif. — despite a tsunami advisory resulting from an 8.8-magnitude earthquake centered in Russia.

During the ceremony, participants observed a moment of silence for our fallen peers. This year, we honored the memory of 175 rangers from 41 countries who were killed in the line of duty (from June 2024 to May 2025). Coordinated by ANPR Life Member and World Ranger Day founder, Jeff Ohlfs, San Luis Obispo County Parks Director offered welcome remarks, followed by a keynote address by Nick Franco, retired California State Park superintendent and retired San Luis Obispo County Parks director. Following the opening remarks, an open “campfire” session was held where many attendees had the opportunity to speak about what “being a ranger” means to them.

Iconic Morro Rock and the glistening waves of the Pacific Ocean lapping upon the sandy shore provided a stunning backdrop for the morning ceremony. Following remarks in the morning, additional activities included a tour of the Cayucas Pier and State Beach with a San Luis Obispo County park ranger, a junior lifeguard event, and a multi-agency ranger vehicle display.

This year's celebration concluded with a group photo and a catered barbecue lunch, provided by Lions Club of Cayucas. The historic Madonna Inn provided a cake, cut by ANPR President Rick Mossman, who was the longest-working ranger present. Rick gave the first slice to Juan Flores, Isla Vista RPD ranger, who was the newest-working ranger in attendance. This special event was possible thanks to support by the Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs and the Ranger Foundation.

Planning for California's World Ranger Day 2026 celebration is already underway and will be hosted in Riverside County to celebrate the 100th anniversary of their ranger program.

According to the International Ranger Federation, recent estimates (Appleton et al., 2022) suggest there are approximately 286,000 rangers working around the globe. IRF President Chris Galliers said in his 2025 World Ranger Day remarks, “let's honour these quiet heroes and work collectively to improve their safety, effectiveness, and recognition — because if they don't protect our natural world, who will?” To see Chris Galliers full World Ranger Day message, visit <https://www.internationalrangers.org/world-ranger-day-2025/>

Additional photos and messages of support for rangers across the United States and the world have been shared on Instagram and Facebook, using such hashtags as #WorldRangerDay, #WorldRangerDay2025, #ANPR, and #IStandWithRangers.

Our scientists at work

Story and photos by Sheridan Steele

*To appreciate
researcher's work,
ROMO deputy
superintendent
visits bear dens
during the winter*

AS THE DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT IN CHARGE OF PARK operations at Rocky Mountain National Park from 1989 to 1996, I often tagged along on various field trips, back-country patrols, and even complex search and rescues. One fall, I asked Hank, one of our most experienced scientists, to accompany him on some of the winter trips to the bear dens, part of a multi-year study focused on the black bear population. It included having radio collars on 10 to 12 bears, which could then be routinely tracked by radio telemetry. The collars worked well, thanks to batteries that only needed to be replaced every two years – while the bears were in hibernation. The standard procedure was to hike and snowshoe to a den using the radio signals as our guide, tranquilize the bear using a spring-loaded syringe on the end of a jab stick, and pulling the bear from the den to collect research data on their health and reproduction. It was hard work getting to the isolated dens, high in the mountains or in deep forests, and it meant for a long day but always a rewarding adventure.

After two arduous trips with no actual bear sightings, I was less enthusiastic about a third trip. However, it was planned for late March, and that meant it would not be as cold, snow would likely be more compacted, and daylight longer. We drove to the southern park boundary, then hiked a few miles through the forest to a rocky slope with patches of snow and ice and a few small cave openings. We did not have to dig through snow to find the bear's den since it was familiar to Hank and obvious as we approached. The first step in the procedure was for Hank to be lowered into the den by his ankles with a flashlight in his mouth to determine if the bear was within reach, and if there were one or more cubs. The adult bear would be tranquilized, but it was too risky to tranquilize cubs.

Upon observing a mother bear and two cubs, Hank signaled (by shaking his leg) that we were to pull him out, which we did. His assistant then prepared a spring-loaded syringe with the tranquilizer at the end of a six-foot jab stick, which looked a lot like a broom handle. Step two was for Hank to be lowered back into the den, again by his ankles, with flashlight and jab stick in one hand. He kept the other hand free to push off the rocks as he got closer to the bear. Once close enough, he would inject the mother and we would then wait 15 minutes for the drug to take effect.

We were instructed to place our packs in the den opening to block light from getting in because that might wake the hibernating bear. Hank explained that the mother bear would sense our human



Collaring black bears helped researchers in Rocky Mountain National Park monitor the population.

presence and the potential threat to her cubs. Further, she would try to come out of her hibernation sleep to respond, hence the importance of the drug.

While we waited for the drug to take effect, Hank told us that once the mother was safely tranquilized, he would go back in and hand out the two cubs to be held inside our coats for warmth, a role for which I quickly volunteered. When the time was up, we lowered Hank back in with a harness and rope that he would place around the adult bear and use to pull her out of the den for us to take the required measurements and samples. The results would be recorded as part of the multi-year bear study. Just as Hank was moving to put the harness on the bear, his assistant yelled, "Quick, get him out of there."

The assistant urgently explained that the syringe had not gone off, and therefore, the mother bear was likely waking up to defend her den and cubs. He said that was the first time the spring-loaded syringe had failed. On this trip, we were accompanied by a *Denver Post* reporter and photographer, so I had sudden visions of a newspaper article with the headline of "Park researcher mauled in den by mother bear." We hurriedly pulled Hank out and explained the problem. We had to do the tranquilizer step over again, and this time the drug was injected properly. Once it was safe, Hank returned into the den to hand out the cubs and rope up the mother who weighed about 150 pounds, below average. Relieved that we



Sheridan Steele holds one of two cubs from a den during a research trip.

had realized the problem before a possible nasty confrontation, we successfully completed the rest of the work and headed home.

The cubs were about the size of a basketball but already with big feet and claws, surprisingly about the size of my hands. One assistant was handed the female cub, which he stuffed inside his coat to keep her warm. She went right to sleep. Hank's assistant then handed me the male cub, which I tried to put inside my coat, but he was having none of it and tried to claw his way up and out.

Meanwhile, our team of five researchers and volunteers weighed the three bears, took blood samples from the mother, checked teeth, and took various measurements. Hank explained that the research was showing that the bears inside Rocky Mountain were "living on the edge," so to speak. They had larger than normal territories (movements tracked by the radio collars), and they were smaller than normal black bears, which seemed to indicate that food was not as available without moving over greater distances. Mothers were averaging one cub rather than the usual two, and the cubs tended to stay with the mother longer than normal. Unlike the American grizzly bear, the black bear, which can also be brown in color, is less threatening to humans. Records indicated that human injuries or deaths from black bears were rare. However, a mother black bear will aggressively attack and fight to protect cubs – one fact that added a little extra nervousness to this den trip with the misfire of the syringe.

Once the work was done and data collected, we lowered the mother back into the den and placed the cubs on the mother's belly. The cubs are born and begin nursing while the mother is hibernating, which seems like a nice arrangement. We then covered the opening of the den with some snow and brush to try to minimize light getting into the den and reduce our scent left behind. As we hiked out, Hank told us that the mother bear will often sense the intrusion and move the cubs to a new den within a day or two. All that remained for that day was the long hike back to the cars left along the highway and a late dinner to be followed by a good night's sleep.

This excerpt is from the book "From Bear Dens to the Oval Office: True stories from my 38 years managing national parks," by Sheridan Steele. The book is a behind-the-scenes look at the work involved in serving millions of park visitors while protecting natural and cultural resources for future generations. The book highlights some of the challenges faced by park managers through amusing and informative stories and concludes with a strong conservation message. The book is available through Amazon books.

Paradise lost

Nighttime photo taken July 25, 2025, from the South Rim, looking to the North Rim with the Dragon Bravo fire still burning. More than 700 people were safely evacuated, with no injuries or loss of life — an amazing accomplishment. Photo: Lauren Cisneros

North Rim of the Grand Canyon's Cape Final takes on a new meaning

☀ By Doug Crispin, Grand Canyon National Park ☀

SAY RANGER, WHERE ARE YOU FROM?" Up until recently, my answer was, "I call North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park home."

Until this July. When a lightning-caused park wildfire jumped two containment lines, then swept unexpectedly through the developed areas of the park. The historic lodge burned to the ground. Again. The first time was 1932, just four years after it had opened. This year's Dragon Bravo Fire affected more than 100 structures, including the park's administrative headquarters, water and wastewater plant, maintenance shops, and many of park's other buildings. All were GONE. Including several park residences. My historic 1928 cabin somehow survived. I soon realized my six-year run as a North Rim interpretive ranger was over.

Let me tell you about my North Rim "home."

While many American National Park Service sites out West cook in summer heat, or eat wildfire smoke, we North Rim rangers usually basked in the cooler temps that can only be found at 8,200-foot elevation. If summer temps reached into the 80s, we North Rim rangers started complaining. It was rare, and evenings always cooled off. Yes, at times some wildfire smoke drifted into the region. But often the North Rim was saved with winds directing smoke instead into Utah.

Living in an historic 300-square-foot cabin was paradise. Overlooking the prettiest ponderosa forest you ever want to see. After cooking inside for almost every meal, I stepped out my door, plopped down on my lawn chair, and enjoyed eating outside.

In the fresh high-elevation air. With no bugs. Watching happy park campers across the street, who were lucky enough to snag a competitive North Rim campsite — a few sites located right on the rim of the Canyon!

There are never any summer crowds at the North Rim. Statistics show that 90 percent of the park's nearly 5 million visitors last year went to the South Rim. I guess being situated at the very end of a 45-mile dead end road and a looong way from any nearby towns, helps select out lesser-motivated travelers.

Wait. There's more.

Let's add in a very rare, completely unfenced, free-roaming, wild bison herd numbering over 300 individuals! On the NPS animal-cuteness scale, the North Rim bison rate 100. With newborn and playful bison calves and the fluffy-tailed endemic Kaibab squirrel. Take that, the South Rim of Grand Canyon!

Yes, we North Rim rangers were unashamedly snobbish about our awesome lifestyle. A coworker once explained it to me, "Ranger Doug, at our elevation, we literally look down on the lower South Rim!"

How about weekend explorations? The trailhead for the Rim-to-Rim Kaibab Trail was a short half-mile away. I kept track of my hikes and trail miles. I logged more than 1,500 trail miles, and exactly 100 backpack days with 77 days spent hiking below the rim. More paradise!

Finally, add in fun and inspirational coworkers, great bosses, plus a tight interdisciplinary park community, and you have a winning park gig. No wonder I kept returning every summer.



Ranger Doug and son Russell taken inside the lodge at the conclusion of his last guitar sing-along ranger program. Five days later the historic lodge was destroyed by fire. Courtesy Doug Crispin

Add in fun and inspirational coworkers, great bosses, plus a tight interdisciplinary park community, and you have a winning park gig. No wonder I kept returning every summer.



Ranger Doug and his son Russell enjoying what turned out to be his last North Rim supper from Cape Final. Courtesy Russell Crispin

THE FIRE TAKES HOLD

The July 4 wildfire burned slowly. Well managed.

My son from Japan was making his annual visit to see his dad at the North Rim. We did two above-the-rim backpack trips, visiting the little-known Honan Point and Cape Final on our last night – a location name that would later take on ominous meaning!

Suddenly a wildfire, about 60 miles north, blew up. Part of Arizona Route 89A was closed. With limited road access, park managers made the very fortuitous decision to evacuate all park visitors. This included the more remote Cape Royal scenic road area.

Blissfully unaware of that critical park evacuation decision, my son and I enjoyed what would become my “last North Rim supper,” munching down our freeze-dried meals as an awesome Grand Canyon sunset unfolded. Leading to a full moonrise follow up. Cape Final paradise!

This is the ponderosa forest at its prettiest. We don’t need no summer tent. Cowboy camping only for us. Enjoying the night sky. Then a red sunrise. Watching the light fill in the Canyon. More paradise.

Reluctantly, we broke morning camp, threw on our backpacks, then headed back to the trailhead. Earlier I had made reservations for my son and I to enjoy a fancy North Rim lodge farewell dinner with two other rangers.

When we arrived at the trailhead, we found a note on the windshield: “Ranger Doug, all visitors have been evacuated from the park. Please stop at HQ when you return.”

“Dang, looks like that fire to the north may have blown up,” I told my son. “You may have to leave for your flight back home a day early. Let’s go see what’s up.”

Locked behind a closed evacuation road gate, I unlocked the lock, then drove back to our administrative area.

The park had a 9:30 a.m. update briefing for all NPS staff. Seems the fire to the North grew in size, prompting a cautious decision to evacuate all park visitors – from the lodge, the rental cabins, and campground. The small park wildfire was still contained and well managed. Following the READY, SET, GO evacuation protocol, park management said we remained in READY mode. Have your go-bag ready, stay in touch by radio or

phone, but go about your normal day.

My son and I returned to my cabin. We cooked a large breakfast and took post-backpack showers. I told him, “I know we have a reservation for a nice lodge meal tonight, but maybe you should just get out while one of two roads remained open.” He agreed. About midday, I said goodbye to the last North Rim visitor to visit the park this summer.

Later, I walked to the nearby laundry room. On my way back to my cabin, I looked to the north. A huge wall of flame and black smoke looked dangerously close. Too close. I didn’t need no phone alert. No, sir. I instantly changed to SET mode. I backup my car to the cabin front door. An hour later, I had nearly all my personal possessions loaded.

About 10 minutes later, a coworker came by to announce, “we are in SET mode.” About 15 minutes later, she came by again and said: GO. GO now.

Four of us car caravanned to the South Rim, arriving shortly after dark. All North Rim evacuees (now refugees) were housed in Albright Training Center rooms. Whew. Everybody made it out. Safely. Some 500 park visitors. About 200 concession employees, And about 50 NPS staff.

A few days later, I unpacked my backpack. I found my backcountry permit in a top pocket. Grasping the history of the moment I said to myself: “This was the last backcountry permit issued at the North Rim this summer.”

I’m hanging onto that baby. I had all my North Rim friends sign it. A souvenir of my North Rim life. A life spent living in paradise.



Doug Crispin is now a summertime South Rim interpretive ranger, filled with many great North Rim memories. Above, with the Dragon Bravo fire still going in the background, he displays the last backcountry camping permit issued this summer on the North Rim. Many of his North Rim friends signed it.

How we relate to fossils

'Cultural Resource Values Associated with National Park Service Fossils'

By Brianna A. Santucci and Vincent L. Santucci

FOSSILS AND PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES ARE NON-RENEWABLE evidence of past life preserved within a geologic context. Typically, fossils are considered as natural resources throughout the scientific community, by public lands managers, and defined by laws. The National Park Service has documented fossils within 288 different parks spanning at least 2 billion years of Earth's history, which preserves an extraordinary diverse record of prehistoric life.

The relationships between humans and fossils is well documented in prehistoric and historic contexts, as well as in modern society. The concept of the human dimensions of paleontological resources assesses how people relate to fossils and the values that humans associate with fossils (Santucci et al., 2017). These values include scientific, educational, recreational, aesthetic, spiritual, and commercial to mention just a few of the ways people connect with fossils, forging the human dimensions of paleontological resources.

National Park Service areas provide wonderful opportunities for the public to discover and observe fossils in a natural setting within a geologic context. Seeing fossils "in the wild" within rock strata is a very different experience compared to seeing fossils assembled into exhibits in a museum. Park rangers leading visitors on a fossil hike recognize the importance of sharing an exciting moment of fossil discovery with a thoughtful resource protection message to ensure future visitors are able to enjoy a similar experience.

In cases where fossils are collected in the field by a researcher who was issued an official permit by the park, these specimens will need to be prepared and formally cataloged into the park's museum collection. The curation of fossil specimens is an important aspect of the scientific and management accountability for these resources and reflects an important cultural resource value applied to fossil specimens. The management of museum collections is traditionally a cultural resource activity undertaken by both the National Park Service and the wider professional museum community.

The National Park Service Paleontology Program began an agency-wide inventory for paleontological resources starting in 1985, which currently documents fossils within 288 different parks. During the past 40 years, fossils have been identified in three general contexts: 1) fossils within a geologic context; 2) fossils within museum collections and exhibits; and, 3) fossils within a cultural resource context. The inventory of fossils from a cultural resource context has revealed some interesting and rare occurrences of fossils from archeological sites, within prehistoric and historic structures, associated with historic resources, some ethnographic significance, and most frequently curated into museum collections (Kenworthy and Santucci 2006).

Fossils are occasionally documented from within archeological sites in association with cultural objects preserved at the locality. Several important and interesting examples are documented in National Park Service areas. Projectile points and arrowheads produced using petrified wood have been documented in parks of the



Figure 1. Petrified wood modified into a projectile point from Petrified Forest National Park, Arizona. Photo: NPS

southwest including Petrified Forest National Park, Arizona (Figure 1). A pendant incorporating the shell of a fossil brachiopod was discovered at Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado (Figure 2). Fossil shark teeth believed to be transported from the Atlantic coast were discovered from archeological sites at Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, Ohio.

Fossils have been observed and documented within the building stones of numerous prehistoric and historic structures within National Park Service areas (Santucci et al. 2021). At Petrified Forest National Park, Arizona, the prehistoric structure referred to as Agate House is constructed with blocks of petrified wood, which is a locally abundant resource used by prehistoric indigenous people (Figure 3). At Gettysburg National Military Park, Pennsylvania,

stone slabs containing dinosaur footprints were intentionally incorporated into the capstones of a stone bridge constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930s. Several parks contain coastal fortifications (e.g., Castillo de San Marcos National Monument, Florida) that incorporate blocks of fossil coquina (shell beds), which has properties that enable the absorption of the impact of a cannon ball. Several of the memorials (e.g., Lincoln Memorial) within the National Mall and Memorial Parks, Washington, D.C., are constructed using the fossil-rich Indiana Limestone preserving the remains of Paleozoic marine invertebrates such as crinoids.

The National Park Service has some wonderful examples of fossils that have significant historical context or association. During the paleontological resource inventory for Colonial National Historical Park, Virginia, a reference to a fossil collected from the Atlantic shorelines near Jamestown Colony was published by a European naturalist named Martin Lister in 1687 (Figure 4). The fossil de-



Figure 2. Brachiopod fossil pendant with drilled hole on display at the Mesa Verde National Park Museum, Colorado. Photo: NPS



Figure 3. Agate House is a prehistoric structure built by ancestral Puebloan people using petrified wood at Petrified Forest National Park, Arizona. Photo: NPS

scribed and figured in this early publication was collected by seaman crossing the Atlantic who understood that the natural and cultural objects in America could be sold to collectors in Europe. Lister's 1687 article represents the earliest and first publication about a fossil from the New World and the Western Hemisphere.

Other noteworthy historical references to fossils from National Park Service areas includes fossils collected by fur traders from the "mauvais terres" in the Dakota Territory. Fossil mammals from areas now within Badlands National Park, South Dakota, were transported east and sold to the few paleontologists working in museums in the eastern United States. Pioneers traveling west along the Oregon Trail documented their discoveries of fossils near Scotts Bluff (today administered as Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska) in their journals and diaries. During the American Civil War, there are accounts of Union soldiers stationed at Fort Washington (now a unit within National Capital Parks East, Maryland) who would collect fossils around the fort on their days off. Famous geologist John Wesley Powell, later to become the director for the U.S. Geological Survey, collected fossils from the trenches during the battle of Vicksburg (now within Vicksburg National Military Park, Louisiana).

A few ethnographic associations of Indigenous Americans with fossils have been encountered during the paleontological resource inventories undertaken by the National Park Service. Although these occurrences are largely undocumented, Adrienne Mayor's book titled, "Fossil Legends of the First Americans," provides an excellent reference to ethnographic association of Native American's with fossils (Mayor 2013). The Lakota Sioux legend reference the dusty old bones scattered throughout the South Dakota badlands (Badlands National Park) as the remains of the "thunder beast." The National Park Service recognizes the potential importance of fossils to Native American tribes, and therefore, advocate for parks to consider consulting with tribes concerning their occurrence, disposition, and interpretation.

The National Park Service Paleontology Program believes and embraces the

Brianna Santucci and Vincent Santucci will present a program on fossils, especially in Colonial National Historical Park, at Ranger Rendezvous 48, 1:15 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 18, 2025.



fact that fossils should be viewed holistically and in consideration of any natural, cultural, or other values that they may possess. These diverse human dimensions and perspectives enhance the significance of fossils and should influence our management of these non-renewable resources with respect to their natural and cultural resource values. Hence no stone is left unturned in the quest to understand and document the fossil record preserved across the National Park Service.

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Figure 4. In 1687, English naturalist Martin Lister published on a fossil pecten specimen collected from a locality near colonial Jamestown which today is within Colonial National Historical Park, Virginia. The fossil specimen was transported across the Atlantic to England and eventually reached Lister. This publication represents the first (earliest) report and illustration of a fossil from the New World and the Western Hemisphere. Photo: NPS

Back to the beach

Stacked schedule includes
top-notch presenters:
Ranger Rendezvous 48,
Virginia Beach, Oct. 14–18, 2025

Aerial view of Virginia Beach, Va., the location of this year's Ranger Rendezvous 48. Photo: Hampton Convention and Visitors Bureau

RANGER RENDEZVOUS RETURNS TO VIRGINIA BEACH this year, the second time in this location since 1993, and the fourth Ranger Rendezvous to be held in Virginia.

This year's program theme is "Rising Tides — Resilient Rangers," where we will explore ways to remain adaptive and flexible while riding professional and personal tides.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Ranger Rendezvous 48 is shaping up to offer a superb program this year, first and foremost, featuring a keynote speech by legendary **former NPS Deputy Director Deny Galvin**. He will talk about a number of topics, including some of his most significant recollections from his decades in the NPS, dilemmas he faced, and how he resolved them; and of course, his perspectives about what is happening to the NPS right now. Galvin will speak at 8 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 16.

Here is a roundup of some more of our great presenters, who will be sharing their expertise, enthusiasm, and encouragement as we gather at Virginia Beach. Three of our speakers are also featured in this quarter's issue of *Ranger* (See "How we relate to fossils," by Brianna Santucci and Vincent Santucci, pages 14-15; and "The dirty work of sanitizing our history," by Mark Segal, Page 23).

Other highlights include:

- A two-part panel on "The Demolition of the National Park Service" with **NPCA, CPANP, ANPR, and PEER**. This event will begin at 2 p.m. Friday, Oct. 17, with a short break then continuing until 4:30 p.m.

- **Dr. Joy James**, professor in the Recreation Management program at Appalachian State University will present two programs during Ranger Rendezvous, one aimed at ranger wellness, and the

other on program deliver. "The Calm Current: Mindfulness for Modern Rangers," will take place 9 a.m., Friday, Oct. 17. Park rangers face a unique blend of physical, emotional, and environmental stressors—from unpredictable field conditions to the emotional demands of conservation work. In this session, we explore how mindfulness can serve as a powerful tool to support mental clarity, emotional resilience, and overall well-being in the face of these challenges.

James also will present "Beyond the Badge: Building Meaningful Junior Ranger Programs," 8:15 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 18. This session delves into how interpretation and education intersect to spark curiosity, build knowledge, and inspire lifelong stewardship through the Junior Ranger experience.

- ANPR Life Member, Harry Yount Lifetime Achievement award winner, and former ANPR president **Butch Farabee** presents two programs, as well. "National Park Service Underwater Parks, Resources, Archaeology, and Dive Programs," is 2:30 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 15. There are 85 million acres included within our national parks, 11 million acres of which are underwater. Since at least 1934, parks have used divers to learn about the resources they protect, and, in 2024, the agency had over 200 certified divers, making 7,100 dives. Farabee, with nearly seven decades of dive experience (still diving), 900 dives, and overseeing the Service's national dive program for four years, will discuss this largely unknown function and responsibility of the NPS.

Farabee also will present "Why Study Death in National Parks," 8:15 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 15. For over 25 years, he has maintained Yosemite's Official Database for Deaths. The park now averages between 15 to 20 deaths per year. Yosemite and Yellowstone have rangers who serve as deputy coroners and Butch was one for over seven years. He will explain why it is important to document these tragedies and what we can learn from them.

- Resilience expert **Alicia Pozsony** will present "Building Inner Resilience in the Heart of Nature," 4-5 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 15. In this uplifting and interactive session, Pozsony helps rangers tap into the natural strength around and within them to overcome life's



Deny Galvin, keynote speaker

challenges with grace, adaptability, and grounded professionalism. Drawing inspiration from the enduring beauty of our parks—that rebuild after floods and forests that regenerate after fires—this session offers practical tools for staying emotionally strong even in high-stress situations.

- James City County Park Ranger **Jennifer Garcia** will present on “Officer Safety,” 1:15-2:15 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 15. She will address Officer Safety for Law Enforcement park rangers in the field as well as safety for front-line park rangers who are not LE, but who are working closely with the public. Garcia will share tips for ways to reduce and recognize complacency and will address the importance of mental health and wellness for front-line park rangers.

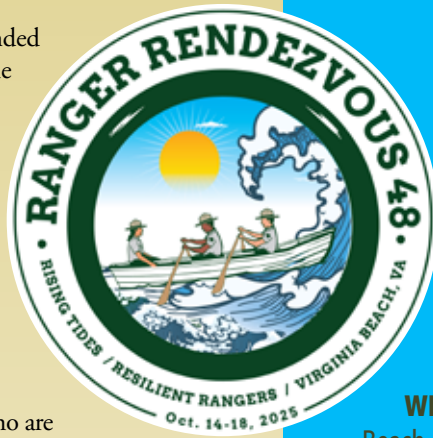
- “Maintaining Balance: Fighting for Parks and Conservation—While Preserving Yourself,” is a panel to be held at 8 a.m. Friday, Oct. 17. **Tom Banks**, NPS seasonal ranger, adjunct professor, and former ANPR board member moderates and takes part in this panel with retired NPS Superintendent **Bob Krumenaker**, **Phil Francis**, chairman of the Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks, among others. What are the campaign strategies that successful conservation advocates have used, and still use, to (1) be effective, (2) tend to achieve results that endure, and (3) offer healthy, balanced lives for the campaigners? What’s the balance between passion, reason, extremism, compromise, patience, and urgency? Hear from experienced campaigners from the past and present.

- Also to look forward to is recently retired Big Bend National Park Superintendent and ANPR Life Member **Bob Krumenaker**, who will present “Activism From the Inside: It Can Be Done (Carefully),” 7:30-8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 15. Parks exist in a political world. NPS employees can never lobby, but there are times when we can advocate for our parks in that world. But it has to be done carefully and strategically. There are also times when we simply can’t. Hear case studies from the successful NPS-led effort to get Apostle Islands National Lakeshore designated as wilderness, and the more perilous work to build support for wilderness at Big Bend National Park in a very red state. We’ll discuss some of the lessons learned and rules of engagement.

Closing out Ranger Rendezvous 48, **Joe Fahey** will present “America’s National Parks Through a Global Lens,” 3:45 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 18. He argues that the U.S. has the greatest national park system in the world. Having visited 50 countries and every state in the union, as well as dozens of national parks and monuments, he shares with the audience the commonality the national parks have with some of the most famous natural and historic sites around the world. And, Fahey argues, things may seem bad now, but “a groundswell of positive change is happening before our very eyes. There is every reason to be hopeful for the future of our national parks.”

CAMARADERIE AND NETWORKING

Of course, as is custom at all Rendezvous’, there is plenty of time for socialization. There is nothing better than reuniting with friends, old and new. The traditional raffle and auction will be ongoing during breaks and at the beginning of each day. And the Hospitality Suite welcomes you every evening!



Ranger Rendezvous 48 logistics

HOW TO REGISTER: Visit www.anpr.org/rendezvous/48 to register online. Registration is open through the day of the event. On-site registration for the main program is available.

WHEN: Oct. 14-18, 2025

WHERE: Wyndham Hotel, Oceanfront Virginia Beach. Learn more about the venue at: <https://www.wyndhamhotels.com/wyndham/virginia-beach-virginia/wyndham-virginia-beach-oceanfront/overview>

HOW MUCH: Ranging from \$45 for one-day student attendance to \$150 for the full event (if registering before the early bird discount). ANPR members receive a discount.

LODGING INFORMATION: Room rate is \$109 plus tax, and a \$7 per day “resort fee.” Reservations may be accomplished by calling the hotel directly at 757-428-7025. Attendees must identify themselves as associated with the group in order to receive these special rates. Reservations must be received no later than Sept. 19, 2025.

FIELD TRIPS: There will be two field trips from which to choose, and possibly a local guided interpretive walk in First Landing State Park, a few minutes from the hotel. Stay tuned for updates on that option.

Field Trip No. 1: Fort Monroe National Monument:

Established in 2011, Fort Monroe provides an excellent opportunity to observe and understand Chesapeake Bay and Civil War history, as well as many other significant stories. A guided tour, which includes visits to locations not generally available to the public, will make for a fascinating experience. Travel time: 45 minutes. Cost \$45.

Field Trip No. 2: Yorktown Battlefield (part of Colonial National Historical Park): The location of the final major battle of the Revolutionary War, the site provides a deep understanding of the events leading up to the battle, as well as the dramatic Siege of Yorktown. A ranger-led tour will provide the strategic details of how the events of September - October 1781 unfolded, and forever shaped the country's history. Travel time: 75 minutes. Cost \$45.

GETTING THERE: Virginia Beach is about 210 miles from Washington, D.C. The closest airport is Norfolk International (ORF), about 17 miles away. From ORF, you can rent a car, Uber, or take a taxi. Other airports include Newport News-Williamsburg (PHF), 47 miles away, and Richmond (RIC), 104 miles away. There is also an Amtrak station in Norfolk. With the purchase of a train ticket to Norfolk, you can also purchase an Amtrak bus ticket from there to Virginia Beach.

Ranger Rendezvous 48 program schedule

Rising tides — resilient rangers



Tuesday, October 14

9 a.m.-4 p.m.: ANPR Board meeting
(open to all)
2-6 p.m.: Registration opens
7-10 p.m.: Hospitality Suite open
7:30-8:30 p.m.: Trivia Night

Wednesday, October 15

7-7:45 a.m.: First-timers breakfast
8-9:45 a.m.: Welcoming Address: ANPR president, regional director and local superintendents; local dignitaries; "State of the Association"
9:45-10:15 a.m.: Coffee break
10:15-11:15 a.m.: Mike Reynolds, NPS deputy director, retired
11:15 a.m.-12 p.m.: Board Reports
12-1:15 p.m.: Lunch
1:15-2:15 p.m.: Breakouts:
— Jonathan Shafer and panel: "Managing the Transition to Management: A round table on Senior Park Leadership"
— Breakout TBA
— Jennifer Garcia: "Officer Safety"
2:30-3:30 p.m.: Breakouts:
— Butch Farabee: "National Park Service Underwater Parks, Resources, Archaeology, and Dive Programs"
— Breakout TBA
— Kayla Sanders: "Self Rescue"
3:30-4 p.m.: Break and raffle
4-5 p.m.: Alicia Pozsony: "Building Inner Resilience in the Heart of Nature"
5:30-6:30 p.m.: President's Reception
6:30-10 p.m.: Hospitality Suite open
7:30-8:30 p.m.: Bob Krumenaker: "Activism From the Inside: It Can Be Done (Carefully)"

Thursday, October 16

7:30-8 a.m.: Announcements and raffle
8-9 a.m.: Keynote Speaker: Deny Galvin, former NPS deputy director, "What's on My Mind"
9 a.m.-5 p.m.: Field Trips or free exploration day
6:30-10 p.m.: Hospitality Suite open
7:30-9 p.m.: Movie Night

Friday, October 17

7:30-8 a.m.: Announcements and raffle
8-9 a.m.: Tom Banks and Panel: "Maintaining Balance: Fighting for Parks and Conservation — While Preserving Yourself"
9-10 a.m.: Joy James: "The Calm Current: Mindfulness for Modern Rangers"
10-10:30 a.m.: Break and raffle
10:30 a.m.-12 p.m.: Membership meeting
12-2 p.m.: Lunch and exploration time
2-3 p.m.: Panel: "The Demolition of the National Park Service," NPCA, CPANP, ANPR, PEER
3-3:30 p.m.: Break and raffle
3:30-4:30 p.m.: "The Demolition of the National Park Service," continued
5-6 p.m.: Awards Presentation
6-7:30 p.m.: Awards Reception; must have tickets to attend
6-10 p.m.: Hospitality Suite open
7:30-10 p.m.: Live music with Seamus Kennedy, an Irish singer, songwriter, musician, comedian, all-around entertainer, and author. Originally from Belfast, Ireland, Kennedy has entertained audiences all over the United States for more than four decades.

Saturday, October 18

7:45-8:15 a.m.: Announcements and raffle
8:15-9:15 a.m.: Breakouts:
— Butch Farabee: "Why Study Deaths in National Parks"
— Dr. Joy James: "Beyond the Badge: Building Meaningful Junior Ranger Programs"
— Breakout TBA
9:30-10:30 a.m.: Membership meeting
10:30-11 a.m.: Break and raffle
11-12 p.m.: Breakouts:
— "Women in the NPS: Round-table discussion"
— "Update on the Royal Caribbean Partnership & the 2026 Season"
— Breakout TBA
Noon-1:15 p.m.: Lunch
1:15-2:15 p.m.: Vincent Santucci and Brianna Santucci: "Cultural Resource Values Associated with National Park Service Fossils"
2:15-3:15 p.m.: Mark Segal: "The Successes and Sanitization of Our History: A Stonewall Veteran Reflects on the Past, Present, and Future of LGBTQ+ Narratives in the Park Service"
3:15-3:45 p.m.: Break and raffle
3:45-5 p.m.: Joe Fahey: "America's National Parks Through a Global Lens"
6-10 p.m.: Hospitality Suite open

● ● ● **NOTE: This schedule is preliminary and for informational purposes only. Changes may occur, so please refer to our online event schedule, which will be available during Ranger Rendezvous.** ● ● ●

A new type of Ranger Rendezvous fundraiser

Online silent auction allows you to vote on prize of your choosing rather than leave it to chance

TO HELP FUND OUR ANNUAL RANGER RENDEZVOUS, ANPR has traditionally hosted a “Super Raffle,” wherein bidders buy tickets to win an array of specially curated “high-level” prizes such as rafting trips, cabin stays and more.

This year, we decided to try something new. In part motivated by ANPR members who have said they would prefer this option, this year ANPR is hosting an online silent auction. We have the same great prizes, only this time, you can bid on the item that most piques your interest.

Here is what is being offered for this year’s online auction. We are continuing to add items as they come in — and welcome any and all donations — so keep checking back to see what’s available.

COLORADO RIVER TRIP. Hatch Expeditions is offering a seven-day motorized trip, free for one person and 20-percent discount for the second person. To be used during the 2026 season and expires October 1, 2026.

SAN JUAN MOUNTAINS CABIN GETAWAY. Offered by ANPR Life Member Lisa Eckert. Relax in the quiet and beauty of an off-grid log cabin nestled in southwest Colorado’s San Juan Mountains at 9,500 feet, with access to the Sneffels Wilderness. Five days, four nights. Cabin reached by road most of the year while winter access is by a two-mile ski, snowshoe or snowmachine (if you have). Cabin has all modern amenities.



AIR B&B STAY, DENVER. Offered by ANPR Life Member Doug Cuillard. Bidders can access details and photographs via the AirBnB website. Look for “Lakeside Hideaway with Views of the Rockies.” Winning bidder will communicate directly with Cuillard.

THREE NIGHTS AIR B&B IN KANAB, UTAH. Offered by Cindy Von Halle, this detached apartment has a private entrance, full bed, private bath, and kitchenette. It’s situated on two acres

among red rocks & juniper forest, very private. Location: 30 miles from Zion NP; 90 miles from Bryce; 75 miles from Antelope Canyon in Page, Ariz., and Lake Powell.

DENALI FIELD CLASS. Donated by Alaska Geographic. Led by distinguished scientists, authors and naturalists, these three-day courses are based in a field camp within Denali National Park; some classes are designed specifically for teachers. To be used in the 2026 season.

ALASKA RAILROAD DENALI. 1 round-trip ticket for two on the Denali Star Train from Anchorage to Denali and back; Adventure Class service. Must be used by September 2026.

ALASKA RAILROAD SEWARD. 1 round-trip ticket for two on the Coastal Classic Train from Anchorage to Seward and back; Adventure Class service. Must be used by September 2026.



AK Railroad / Riley Stefano

TEEPEE STAY / MONTANA. Offered by ANPR Life Members Liz and Clair Roberts. One week stay in a teepee outside Yellowstone National Park. This is a rustic experience! To be used between June and September 2026.

Other highlights include round-trip tickets for two to Denali NP on the Alaska Railroad, with two nights lodging at a Holland America Princess lodge; custom photos by Connie Rudd and Kendra Balazs; a large Steiff collectible teddy bear; WPA-style memorabilia and posters from Rob Decker and Jon Jarvis; NPS 75th anniversary coasters and a painting, both donated by Ray Brende; and a 1931 Yorktown 150th anniversary hardcover, and a discontinued Eastern National polar fleece, donated by Vincent Kordack.

Keep checking back on the website (www.anpr.org, and scroll to “Silent Auction 2025”) for more items as they are added! Bidding is active now!

Be sure to bring photos for the annual contest!

Submit your photos for the 2025 ANPR Photo Contest! Start taking or looking through your photos for your favorites to submit! Rendezvous participants enjoy looking at the photos to identify where they were taken and voting for their favorites.

Categories include:

1. Landscape (Daylight images of land, sky and/or waters at a distance)
2. Wildlife (Wild animals in the image)
3. Historical and Cultural Resources (Image represents history or cultural parts of NPS sites)
4. The Human Connection (A person or people in the image)
5. Big Sky (Large sky in the image)
6. Ranger Rendezvous (Image taken at a Ranger Rendezvous)

HOW TO ENTER

All photos must be taken within a national park unit, international protected area, or at a previous Ranger Rendezvous. Contestants may enter only one photo per category. Printed photos should be unframed and recommended size of 8x10 inches.

Write your name, location of the photo, and the category on the back of each print. Drop off photos at the registration desk by end of day Oct. 14. If unable to attend, images can be sent to arrive no later than Oct. 1, 2025, to Bill Wade, 12675 N. Sunrise Shadow Drive, Marana, AZ 85658 or bwade@anpr.org. Winners will be selected from each category, and a “Best of Show” photo will take the top spot. All winners will receive a gift card, recognition at the Rendezvous, and have their photos published in *Ranger* magazine.

ANPR Board of Directors reports

BILL WADE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I continue to respond to numerous media requests and inquiries about what is happening in the NPS and to NPS employees. Media interest continues to be high and our efforts, combined with those of our partners (CPANP, NPCA and PEER) appears to be having some effect on actions by the Congress related to the 2026FY budget for the NPS and other issues they are considering.

We have received a grant from the Western Conservation Foundation to provide input to weekly media releases and to meet with Congressional Representatives in some targeted districts (those with NPS areas in them).

I continue to lead the team planning the RR48 in Virginia Beach. I visited the Wyndham Hotel in July to review the meeting space and to plan food and beverage events. I met with our local liaison ANPR member, who will help plan field trips and other local logistical needs.

RICK MOSSMAN, PRESIDENT

I have been busy all spring and summer working with the board in dealing with all the attempts by this administration of gutting the NPS. This last spring we put out a number of press releases and handled over 250 media interviews/info requests. In May, Executive Director Bill Wade and I met with NPCA, PEER, and the Retirees coalition to form a working group to fight together and get the same facts and messaging out. In June and July, I had weekly Zoom calls with a number of subgroups working on plans for World Ranger Day and Founders Day.

TROY HUNT, SEASONAL PERSPECTIVES

I have continued my work in monitoring the needs and morale of seasonal employees. This is challenging when many are posting anonymously to social media for their protection. This limits my ability to reach out to offer support for their professional and personal welfare.

I am actively engaged in the planning for RR 48. This includes helping develop the programming, supporting the A/V needs for the event, and coordinating the Supernauth Scholarship program. I will continue in the development and orchestration of another successful Rendezvous. See you in Virginia Beach.

RAE EMERSON, EDUCATION & TRAINING

I have been monitoring events and legislative activity impacting the National Park Service and other land management agencies.

I also have been providing resources and strategies to new and continuing mentees. I am attending planning meetings and supporting the Ranger Rendezvous 48 program committee.

I am hoping to create an online ANPR training program and am seeking individuals who can help with developing a well-defined course structure with relevant content and who would be interested in serving as an instructor or presenter. Please contact me at remerson@anpr.org

MARGIE STEIGERWALD, PROFESSIONAL ISSUES

This summer I've been working at Klondike Gold Rush NHP in the Chief of Interpretation role through the Experienced Service Program, a nonprofit that hires retirees with specific skills to fill agency gaps. This

experience has provided a window into the new reality in which the NPS finds itself after staff shake-ups and a hollowed out workforce.

My initial tasks included posting the signs with the QR code asking the public to comment on "any signs or other information that are negative about either past or living Americans or that fail to emphasize the beauty, grandeur, and abundance of landscapes and other natural features (Secretary's Order 3431 in support of Executive Order 14253, titled Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History)." In response to the same Order, I conducted a review of the park's exhibits, waysides, publications, film, and brochures looking for content that might fit the criteria. I found none.

CRYSTAL MUZIK, MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

ANPR membership has been holding steady numbers throughout the year, with slight membership growth. Please be on the lookout for an email if your renewal is coming up and continue to help support and our mission by renewing your membership. We are in the final stages of coordinating with another membership service offering pro deals on outdoor, and hunting/fishing gear through the company, Guidefinder. We will be offering more information on how to access the deals through our ANPR e-mail newsletter and on our website.

I recently spent seven days in July on the Royal Caribbean cruise line as an ANPR Enrichment Speaker giving three presentations about Alaska. I printed out the new ANPR tri-fold brochures and spoke to over 200 people about the importance of our organization. Looking forward, I am seeking diverse ways to enrich the membership experience.



Welcome to the ANPR family

Here are the newest members of the Association of National Park Rangers

(updated 8/10/2025)

Diana Garcia	Cooperstown, NY
Dusty Pate	Gorham, ME
Nathan Springer	Two Harbors, MN
Victoria Sutton	Florence, AZ
Ruth Coffey	Salisbury, MD
David Fitzpatrick	Rockledge, PA
Joy James	Boone, NC
James McGill	Eads, CO
Jacqueline Ashwell	Washington, D.C.
Douglas Smith	Dripping Springs, TX
David Huntley	Globe, AZ
Rena Fugate	Virginia Beach, VA
Christopher Kennedy	Provincetown, MA
Nick Artim	Middlebury, VT
Pete Webster	Kalispell, MT
Dennis Bartow	Bethany Beach, DE
Lillian Pell	Yosemite, CA
Janice Heller	Saint George, UT
Mark Hollomon	Powder Springs, GA
Katherine Stevenson	Potomac, MD
Randy Oldfield	Lafayette, OR
M. Sarah Creachbaum	Port Angeles, WA
Barbara Brundage	gift membership
Britt Lenzi	gift membership
Carly Isaacson	gift membership
Sophia Jaramillo	gift, BIBE, TX
Mike Panz	gift membership
Matthew Sparacio	gift membership

INTERPRETATION

Flummoxed: Current EOs muddy the waters

TWO RECENT EXECUTIVE ORDERS (EO) RELATING to national parks have stirred up memories of a trip I took a decade ago...to India.

The cold marble on my bare feet was electric. I could feel history coursing out of the stone and into my soul. I'd wanted to visit India since I was a little boy, but the Taj Mahal was not high on my list. Too predictable, too touristy I thought. Boy, was I wrong.

I don't recall exactly how much it cost to go into the Taj then, but today it costs 1,100 rupees ... about \$13. We arrived in the early afternoon, paid our fee and accepted the complimentary bottle of water and paper shoe covers to protect the marble.

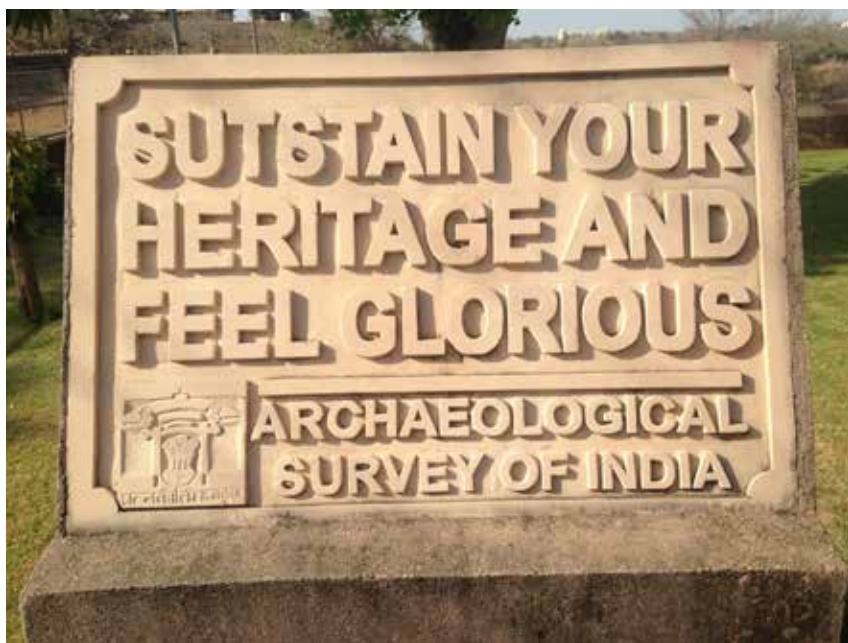
So. Many. People. As we approached the steps up to the truly-stunning mausoleum, I noticed shoes laying everywhere. None of the people who appeared to be Indian were wearing shoes at all. My clothes and complexion clearly indicated that I was not Indian, but still, I felt "othered" in my pale blue shoe covers. Then I learned that I paid about 22 times more for my ticket than the barefooted people around me. It didn't spoil my visit ... but I also clearly didn't forget it.

The next morning, we woke before dawn and went back. We were the first people into the grounds of the Taj. It was a very different experience: almost empty, mist rising off the Yamuna River, golden morning light flooding the white marble. I carried my shoes. I truly didn't care that I paid 22 times more than the majority of people around me, but it felt like a more authentic experience.

The EO titled "Making America Beautiful Again by Improving Our National Parks" calls for parks to charge higher entrance fees to international visitors, the way India does at the Taj Mahal. That just doesn't set well with me, but honestly, I can't explain why. Why am I happy to pay more in another country, but don't want that to happen here? Is it because I perceive America to be "better than that?" And if so, does that reek of jingoism? Will park staff have to ask everyone for proof of citizenship? Will we all have to carry "papers" with us wherever we go? I've got many questions and few answers.

The second EO impacting parks is titled "Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History." The Order requires every national park to display a notice encouraging visitors to report "signs or other information that are negative about either past or living Americans or that fail to emphasize the beauty, grandeur, and abundance of landscapes and other natural features."

I believe that a truly great nation recognizes that not all is perfect, and rather than hiding those imperfections, highlights them as learning opportunities. The Japanese call this *Wabi-Sabi*, exemplified



Spelling errors aside, this sign outside Chittorgarh Fort in Udaipur, India expresses a beautiful sentiment. Photo courtesy: Gary Bremen

by the art of Kintsugi where flaws in a piece of pottery or other art are not hidden, but highlighted in gold or silver. Parks like Minidoka, Brown v. Board of Education, and Sand Creek Massacre were established precisely to tell a more complete story. How can the incarceration, unfair treatment and outright murder of American citizens not be negative about past Americans?

I also keep thinking of something else that struck me in India. Near the entrance of many of the country's most important places was a sign exhorting visitors to protect the site. It said, "Sustain your heritage and feel glorious." Wow. I started telling people about that sign at citizenship ceremonies I organized when I was a ranger, explaining that they were now part owners of some of the most magnificent places in the world, but also encouraging them to not forget where they came from. Taking pride in one's heritage (or one's family, community, nation or other group affiliation) isn't a bad thing ... unless it moves beyond simple pride to become vanity.

America's national parks showcase the very best this country has to offer, from stunning natural beauty to great achievements by her citizens. They also recognize that no nation is a shining city on a hill. Is there a better way to highlight the successes and challenges of the American Experiment than the parks? I sure can't think of one.

Gary Bremen retired in 2022 after 36 years as a National Park Service ranger.

I believe that a truly great nation recognizes that not all is perfect, and rather than hiding those imperfections, highlights them as learning opportunities.

— Gary Bremen

\$ Donor Recognition list

(Updated 8/10/2025)

Half Dome \$500-999

- Rebecca Harriett (*in memory of Rick Smith*)

Half Dome \$500-999

- Jacqueline Ashwell
- Rick Erisman
- Scott Isaacson
- Meg Weesner (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
- Advice for Life

Cliff Palace \$250-499

- Joseph Gallegos
- Jon and Sue Lewis (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
- Bill Wade (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
- Nancy Ward

Devil's Tower \$100-249

- Paul Anderson (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
- Carol Arp (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
- Gilbert Backlund (*in memory of Bill Halainen*)
- David Bank (*in honor of Rick Hutchinson*)
- Douglas Barrett (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
- Marcia Blaszak (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
- Shiera Brady (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
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- Ray Brende
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- Irv/Eileen Taxe Levine (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
- Jay & Deb Liggett (*in memory of Rick Smith*)

- Mike Lynch (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
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- Ed Rizzotto (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
- Jerry Rogers (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
- Chuck/Maureen Short (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
- Christina Smart (*in honor of Anita Smart*)
- Dave Stransky
- Nancy Ward (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
- Toni Wurth (*in honor of her son-in-law*)
- Phil Young (*in memory of Rick Smith*)

Appalachian Trail \$50-99

- Kelly Barris
- Tom and Norma Cherry (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
- Sonya Daw
- Melissa DeVaughn (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
- Elaine and Fred Harmon
- Carol Hegman
- Marin Karraker
- Fred Koegler (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
- Len/Harriett Kronman (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
- Bob Krumenaker (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
- Claire Morris
- Margaret Sullivan- 50 (*in honor of Mary Sullivan*)
- Tom Vaughan (*in memory of Rick Smith*)

Little Rock Central High School (\$25-49)

- Jeff Ohlfs (*in memory of Rick Smith*)
- Camilla Price
- Tom Young

Liberty Bell Up to \$25

- Cathy Buckingham
- Rebecca Jacobs
- Randy Oldfield

Old Faithful (monthly donations/ \$25+)

- Meg Weesner



Kudos List

These people have either given someone a gift membership to ANPR or recruited a new member. Thanks for your help and support!
(updated 8/10/2025)

- Scott Isaacson
- Greta Ketchner
- Cathy Buckingham
- Jonathan Shafer
- Bill Wade
- Carol Hegman

Mark Segal, at right, will be a guest presenter during Ranger Rendezvous 48. His program begins at 2:15 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 18, 2025.



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The dirty work of sanitizing our history

By Mark Segal, guest columnist

ON THE NIGHT OF JUNE 28, 1969, at 18 years old, I found myself in the middle of a riot on Christopher Street in New York City, outside a bar called the Stonewall Inn. That night, the men in uniform weren't there to protect us — they were there to harass and arrest us simply for being who we were. But for the first time, the LGBTQIA+ community fought back. That act of resistance sparked a movement and gave birth to a vibrant, visible, and determined LGBTQIA+ community.

None of us who were there that night could have imagined that 50 years later, the site of that uprising would become a National Monument — and that the people in uniform would now be National Park Service rangers. In 1969, those police uniforms represented fear and repression. Today, NPS uniforms represent education, inclusion, and protection. They help ensure that visitors to the Stonewall National Monument understand why that small bar and the people who stood up that night changed the course of American history.

But now, Stonewall — and other historic sites across the country — face a new kind of threat.

The Trump administration has launched a directive aimed at rewriting and sanitizing American history. Under the guise of “Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History,” they’ve asked the public to report any content at National Parks that they deem “negative” or “unpatriotic.” What does that mean in practice? It means efforts to soften the horrors of slavery, rename Native American landmarks — and yes, even erase or downplay LGBTQIA+ history, including at Stonewall.

Eric Katz wrote in *Government Executive* “At Manzanar National Historic Site, once a Japanese internment camp, a visitor put it perfectly: ‘The entire purpose of parks like this one is to learn from the mistakes



Stonewall National Monument was dedicated on Monday, June 26, 2016, as the first unit of the National Park Service established to tell the story of the LGBTQIA+ Civil Rights Movement. The dedication had the support of then-Congressman Jerrold Nadler, then-Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, and then-National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis. Photo: NPS

of the past so we can avoid repeating them. Please do not water down the reality of the experience for future visitors.” That sentiment applies to Stonewall, too.

I’ll never forget the first time I returned to the Stonewall after it became a National Monument. As I walked into Christopher Park, I saw a National Park Ranger speaking to a group of visitors, telling the story of the riots and how that night became a turning point in American history. I moved in closer, expecting a watered-down version—but instead, she got it right. She told the story truthfully, with pride and precision. When the group began to disperse, I approached her and thanked her for making me, as a gay man, feel proud.

Never did I imagine, all those years ago, that I’d one day be thanking someone in uniform at Stonewall. That’s the power of preserving history—not just as it happened, but as it continues to inspire.

It’s also why I’ve become the National Parks Conservation Association’s Ambassador for change to stand with rangers and others to protect the history of our parks and monuments.

Now, we must protect that truth; because history belongs to all of us, and it must never be erased.



Mark Segal partners with the National Parks Conservation Association as the organization’s Ambassador for Change. Together, they share the Stonewall story and its impact on American society through public engagement, education, and events. Mark Segal is a pioneering figure in LGBTQIA+ activism, known for his involvement in the Stonewall Uprising and founding membership in the Gay Liberation Front. He served as a marshal during the first Gay Pride March in 1970. In 1972, Segal initiated a campaign against LGBTQIA+ invisibility on television, disrupting shows like the CBS Evening News. Collaborating with Pennsylvania Gov. Milton Shapp in 1974-75, he helped enact the nation’s first executive order banning discrimination in state government, leading to the creation of the first official cabinet-level commission on LGBTQIA+ affairs. In 2025, Mark is working with the National Parks Conservation Association to ensure more people know the Stonewall story and that more inclusive stories are told throughout existing park sites. Learn more at www.marksegalstonewall.com



ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL PARK RANGERS

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