



The Coalition Weekly Report

Wednesday, January 8, 2020

Volume 4

Number 01

Incidents

Muir Woods NM **Hiker Killed By Falling Redwood**

Five trees fell onto a Muir Woods trail on December 24th, striking two people and killing one of them.

The incident occurred near sunset on Christmas Eve, about a half hour before the park was to close. Three people were walking on Hillside Trail when five trees collapsed like dominos. Subhradeep Dutta, 28, of Edina, Minnesota, was struck and killed by a falling 200-foot redwood.

The trees may have been weakened by the heavy rain that fell on the area over the two weeks before the incident.

Source: Wilson Walker, [KPIX News](#); Sarah Jackson, [NBC News](#).

Grand Canyon NP **Man Missing For Eleven Days Found Alive**

A 58-year-old man who had been missing in the Grand Canyon for 11 days was found alive on January 2nd. He was flown out of the canyon by helicopter and at the time of the report (last Friday) was undergoing a medical evaluation.

Martin O'Connor was found on the rugged New Hance Trail, one of the most difficult trails on the South Rim.

O'Connor had been missing since December 22nd, when he was last seen at a lodge on the South Rim.

Source: By Michelle Iracheta, [Houston Chronicle](#).

Death Valley NP **Eleven Injured And One Killed In Four Accidents Over Recent Weeks**

Park rangers responded to a two-car collision on CA-190 on the evening of December 30th – the fourth major motor vehicle accident in the park in recent weeks. Collectively, there have been 11 park visitors injured and one fatality.

Around 4:50 p.m. on December 30th, Takumi Sagawa, of Hokkaido, Japan, allowed his Kia Optima to drift into the oncoming lane on CA-190 east of Stovepipe Wells. Xiaomin Deng, of Sammamish,

Washington, was driving a Chevrolet Malibu in the opposite direction and attempted unsuccessfully to avoid the head-on collision.

Two people were transported by air ambulances due to serious injuries. Three people with moderate injuries were transported by ground ambulances.

Source: [National Park Service](#).

National Park System Park Operating Status Summary

A summary of recent openings, closures and other changes in the status of parks and their facilities,

- *Indiana Dunes NP* – As noted in a previous edition, the park has temporarily closed down the western portion of the parking area and all beach access at the Lake View area in Beverly Shores due to rising lake levels and erosion. The closure will last through May 1st or further notice. Last week, the mayor of Portage joined Porter County, Ogden Dunes and Beverly Shores officials in declaring emergencies on their respective lakefronts as a result of the worsening erosion problem occurring along the Lake Michigan shoreline. “Indiana Dunes National Park is a gem, and it must be protected,” she said. “I am declaring this emergency because we need to act before it is too late. I am calling on the state and federal governments to work with surrounding communities to address this serious public safety issue.” Source: Anna Ortiz, [Munster Times](#).
- *Harpers Ferry NHP/C&O Canal NHP/Appalachian NST* – Several cars of a CSX train derailed off a bridge while crossing the Potomac River at Harpers Ferry early on the morning of December 21st, causing the NPS to close sites at Harpers Ferry, including The Point and John Brown’s Fort, as well as parts of Chesapeake & Ohio National Historical Park and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. Other areas — including the crossings from Harpers Ferry to the Maryland Heights trail and the C&O Canal towpath, plus the footbridge attached to the CSX bridge —have also been closed. Source: Hallie Miller, [Baltimore Sun](#).
- *Great Smoky Mountains NP* – Laurel Creek Road, the seven-mile access road leading from the Townsend Wye to Cades Cove, has been closed to all motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians while the Bote Mountain Tunnel is repaired. It will remain closed until February 29th. The full closure, beginning just past Tremont Road, is necessary to allow equipment set-up for the repair of the internal drainage system in the walls and ceiling of the 121-foot long tunnel. Crews will enclose and heat the tunnel, allowing the temperature-sensitive repairs to be conducted during the winter months when visitation is lower. Intermittent single-lane closures will be necessary between March 1st and June 15th to complete the tunnel repairs and to re-pave the tunnel area. The Cades Cove Campground, normally open during the winter months, was closed on December 30th and will not reopen until March 5th. To accommodate winter campers, Elkmont and Smokemont campgrounds will remain open year-round. Source: Kristy Kepley-Steward, [WLOS News](#).

Congressional Actions

Reports on legislation, upcoming hearings and new public laws of relevance to the national parks, prepared by Don Hellmann, former assistant director, legislative and Congressional affairs for the National Park Service.

New Public Laws

December 19 – The president signed into law H.R. 5363, to reauthorize mandatory funding programs for historically black colleges and universities and other minority-serving institutions. (Public Law 116–91).

December 20 – The president signed into law:

- S. 1790, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2020 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year. (Public Law 116–92).
- H.R. 1865, making further consolidated appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2020. (Public Law 116–94).

Senate Actions

December 17 – The Senate agreed to the conference report to accompany S. 1790 – a bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2020 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year – by a vote of 86 yeas to 8 nays. See [the Coalition Weekly Report of December 18th](#) for a summary of the provisions of the conference report that are applicable to the National Park Service. The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law.

December 17 – The Committee on Environment and Public Works approved, among other business items, S. 3051, to improve protections for wildlife. The bill makes a number of amendments to existing fish and wildlife protection programs under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department of Commerce. Sec. 110 of the bill extends the authorization for the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network under the National Park Service from FY 2019 through FY 2025.

December 19 – The Senate passed H.R. 1424, to ensure the Secretary of Veterans Affairs permits the display of Fallen Soldier Displays in national cemeteries. The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law.

December 19 – The Senate passed H.R. 1865, to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint a coin in commemoration of the opening of the National Law Enforcement Museum in the District of Columbia, as amended by the House, by a vote of 71 yeas to 23 nays. The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law. The bill includes funding for the National Park Service for the remainder of FY 2020, along with other legislative matters that were attached to the bill. See the entry for H.R. 1865, under House action on December 17, below, for a description of those provisions.

House Actions

December 16 – The House passed:

- H.R. 150, to modernize Federal grant reporting, with the amendments made by the Senate. The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law.
- S. 216, to provide for equitable compensation to the Spokane Tribe of Indians of the Spokane Reservation for the use of tribal land for the production of hydropower by the Grand Coulee Dam. The dam is within Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area. The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law.
- H.R. 453, to take certain Federal lands in Tennessee into trust for the benefit of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The lands are from the Tennessee Valley Authority with some of them being taken into trust to memorialize remains transferred from TVA under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and other lands important for interpreting the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail.

December 17 – The House passed H.R. 1865, to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint a coin in commemoration of the opening of the National Law Enforcement Museum in the District of Columbia, as amended by the Senate, with a further amendment. The further amendment of the House consisted of the text of the FY 2020 Further Continuing Appropriations Act for FY 2020 and several end-of-the-session bills Congress wanted to get passed. H.R. 1865 now includes appropriations for various federal agencies, including the National Park Service, for the remainder of FY 2020 as well as related NPS legislation. The bill passed by a vote of 297 yeas to 120 nays. The bill

now returns to the Senate for further action. As passed by the House, H.R. 1865 includes the following of interest to the NPS.

Division D – Appropriates \$3.377 billion for the National Park Service, which is \$154.6 million above the FY 2019 appropriation, and \$635.6 million above the president's budget request. Within that amount, the bill appropriates:

- \$2.576 billion for Operation of the National Park System, which is an increase of \$74.2 million above the FY 2019 appropriation and \$151.4 million over the president's budget request. Within this account, \$3.3 million is provided for the 400 Years of African-American History Commission and \$3.3 million is provided for the Semiquincentennial Commission.
- \$71.166 million for National Recreation and Preservation, which is an increase of \$7 million above the FY 2019 appropriation and \$38.8 million above the president's budget request. Within this account, the committee recommends \$21.9 million for the national heritage areas program and \$3 million for the Chesapeake Gateways and Watertrails program.
- \$118.6 million for the Historic Preservation Fund, which is an increase of \$16 million above the FY 2019 appropriation and \$86 million above the president's budget request. Within this account, the bill includes \$66 million for State and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices; \$16 million for Save America's Treasures grants; \$750,000 for competitive grants for the survey and nomination of properties to the National Register of Historic Places and as National Landmarks associated with communities currently under-represented; \$15.5 million for competitive grants to document, interpret, and preserve historical sites associated with the African American Civil Rights Movement; \$2,500,000 to establish a new civil rights grant program that would preserve and highlight the sites and stories associated with securing civil rights for All Americans, including women, American Latino, Native American, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and LGBTQ Americans; \$10 million for grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and \$7,500,000 for competitive grants for the restoration of historic properties of national, State and local significance listed on or eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.
- \$389.3 million for Construction, which is increase of \$24.6 million above the FY 2019 appropriation and \$143 million above the president's budget request. The recommendation does not include funds to rehabilitate the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site to serve as a new regional office location for what was previously referred to as the Pacific West Region, but is now divided up into four different new Department of the Interior regions.
- \$208.4 million for Land Acquisition, which is an increase of \$40 million above the FY 2019 appropriation and \$193.6 million above the president's budget request. Within this account is \$140 for the state grant program, and \$55.4 million for federal land acquisition and acquisition management, and \$13 million for the American Battlefield Protection grants program.
- \$15 million for the Centennial Challenge program, which is a decrease of \$5 million from the FY 2019 appropriation and \$15 million above the president's budget request. However, \$5 million was provided to the National Park Foundation in the ONPS appropriation, above, to allow them to leverage matching grant funding for NPS Centennial projects.
- \$1 million for the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission to plan, execute, and coordinate programs and activities in honor of the 100th anniversary of the passage and ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guaranteed women the right to vote.

The bill also includes the following:

- Sec. 113 extends the authority for several national heritage areas as follows: Extends the authority for federal funding for the National Aviation Heritage Area through September 20, 2022; extends the authority for federal funding for the Oil Region National Heritage Area through September 20, 2022; increases the ceiling on appropriations for the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor from \$15 million to \$17 million; increases the ceiling on appropriations for the South Carolina National Heritage Area from \$15 million to \$17 million; increases the ceiling on appropriations for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor from \$12 million to \$14 million.

- Sec. 425, an extension of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act authority to collect fees on public lands through October 1, 2021.
- Sec. 434, an extension of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network for one year.
- Sec. 442, includes certain limitations on oil and gas development near Chaco Culture National Historical Park.
- Section 443 designates the David R. Obey Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center. The center, located in Ashland, Wisconsin, is owned by the U.S. Forest Service. Former Rep. Obey was previously chairman of the House Appropriations Committee and was a long-time supporter of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, and the Ice Age and North County National Scenic Trails in his congressional district, as well as the National Park Service in general.
- Division K – National Law Enforcement Museum Commemorative Coin – This division authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury to issue a commemorative coin in 2021 with the proceeds going to the National Law Enforcement Museum in Washington, D.C., to be used for educational and outreach programs and exhibits.
- Division P – Other Matters – Title VII extends the authorization for the American Battlefield Protection Act through FY 2028 and increases the authorization of appropriations from \$10 million to \$18 million annually; requires the secretary of the interior to establish a battlefield interpretation modernization matching grant program under which the secretary may provide competitive grants to states, tribes, local governments, and nonprofit organizations for projects and programs that deploy technology to modernize battlefield interpretation and education; requires the secretary to establish a battlefield restoration matching grant program under which the secretary may provide grants to states, tribes, local governments, and nonprofit organizations for projects that restore day-of-battle conditions on land preserved under the battlefield acquisition grant program. Title XVIII requires the secretary of the interior to conduct a study of the Kentucky Wildlands in several counties of the Appalachian Mountains in eastern Kentucky to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating the area as a National Heritage Area.

National Park Service

National Park System

A summary of articles pertaining to management and oversight of the NPS, to current trends and issues affecting the National Park System, or to either all or parts of the entire system.

- *NPS Drops Plan For New CUA Fees* – “While awaiting formal confirmation, a coalition of travel organizations has been apprised that David Vela, deputy director exercising the authority of director for the National Park Service, has stated the new commercial use authorization (CUA) requirements planned for 2020 will not be implemented,” reports Bus and Motorcoach News. “The NPS has been consulting on the changes with organizations including the United Motorcoach Association, International Motorcoach Group, American Bus Association, National Tour Association, Ontario Motor Coach Association, Interel Group, Trailways and United States Tour Operators Association. Vela further apprised there will be changes to the CUA program in the future. He indicated the CUA permit fees will likely be lower than \$300, and group tours will not be subject to the per-person entrance fees. He also indicated future plans likely will require commercial tour operators to pay vehicle entrance fees similar to those charged automobiles.” Source: Ken Presley, [Business and Motorcoach News](#).
- *Park Service Again Ranks Low In Workplace Survey* – The NPS came in at 320th out of 415 agencies polled in the annual survey of best places to work in the federal government – almost the same as last year, when the NPS ranked 322nd. DOI dropped a level to number 10 out of 17 large agencies. “The Park Service survey responses produced middling improvement for how the agency's leaders were viewed in terms of leadership, empowering employees, fairness, senior leaders, and supervisors,” reports *National Parks Traveler*. “Out of 14 categories measured, the Park Service ranked in the lower quartile of all government agencies in eight categories. The ‘Work-Life Balance’ category was the worst for the Park Service, with the survey

ranking the agency 391 out of 414 agencies.” Staffing levels continue to drop. The NPS has 12,363 employees in 2018; in 2003, it had 16,404 employees. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#).

Around The Parks

Park reports are in alphabetical order. Included are proposals in the works for new areas or changes in designation for current NPS units.

- *Cape Hatteras NS* – The Oregon Inlet Fishing Center, a park-owned concession at the southern tip of Bodie Island, is about to be upgraded. The center include a 60-slip marina, seven buildings, approximately 7.4 acres of upland and submerged land, parking lots, and fuel system for vessels and vehicles. “The National Park Service and our lessee, Oregon Inlet Marinas, LLC, seek to replace the existing, deteriorating structures with modern, sustainable buildings that are adapted to sea level rise and storm surge, as well as make additional improvements to the premises,” said the park. The main marina building was built between 1963 and 1964, and all the buildings at the marina are in poor condition and vulnerable to storm surge and sea level rise. Comments on proposed changes are being accepted through January 10th at the park’s [PEPC webpage](#). Source: Sam Walker, [OBX Today](#).
- *Cape Hatteras NS* – Tideland Electric Membership Corporation is expected to begin a project this month that will improve the reliability of electric service to Ocracoke Island. The park issued a special use permit for the electric cooperative to replace with an underground cable an overhead pole line that runs 1.75 miles on Pole Road along seashore property near the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum to the south end of Hatteras Island. The power line is the sole source of electricity to the 1,385 electrical customers on Ocracoke Island. Source: [Coastal Review Online](#).
- *Denali NP* – The park and Federal Highways are working on options to improve the resiliency of Denali Park Road or possibly reroute a portion of the road at Pretty Rocks Landslide, located at mile marker 45.4, during the 2020 season. The Pretty Rocks portion of the road has become increasingly unreliable and unpredictable in recent years. Prior to 2004, this portion of the road only required light maintenance every two to three years. In 2004 the road began dropping approximately two feet per year, and since 2014 the rate of movement through this area has increased substantially, culminating in a measured drop of two inches a day during the 2019 season. The park is currently considering several options to address the issue in both the short- and long-term, including reestablishing the road in its current location, spanning the Pretty Rocks portion with a bridge, or rerouting the Polychrome Bluffs portion of the road. The park is evaluating a plan that would allow buses operated by the park’s concessionaire, Doyon/Aramark Joint Venture, to continue to operate up to mile marker 43. A turnaround area is available near the East Fork Bridge that may permit buses to safely maneuver around and return east. The park is considering design options to prepare the site for high capacity use by buses with minimal impact on the landscape. You can read more about the project at [this link](#). Source: [National Park Service](#).
- *Glacier NP* – The park is pursuing options for providing shuttle service during the 2020 summer season. Flathead County Eagle Transit has been operating the shuttle service under a cooperative agreement with the park and the state of Montana since 2007. After two months of discussions with national, regional and local park officials, Flathead County commissioners voted on December 11th to terminate their cooperative agreement to provide the service. The shuttle service typically runs in July and August, weather permitting. Go to the park’s [PEPC page](#) to see the complete Going-to-the-Sun Road Corridor management plan. Source: [Explore Big Sky](#).
- *White Sands NP* – With the president’s signing of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2020 on December 20th, White Sands became the system’s 62nd designated national park (it was previously a national monument). Aside from the name change, the federal legislation

included provisions for a land exchange between White Sands and the U.S. Army, which operates an adjacent missile range. Source: [Las Cruces Sun-News](#).

- *Yellowstone NP* – Steamboat Geyser ended up 2019 with a new record for eruptions – a total of 47, up from a record 32 in 2018. Over the years, Steamboat has gone decades without erupting, including a quiet period between 1911 and 1961. USGS scientists say the recent eruptions mimic activity spikes in the 1980s, and do not signal future volcanic activity at Yellowstone. Source: Kristin Lam, [USA Today](#).
- *Zion NP* – The Trust for Public Lands announced in December that it had struck an agreement with a family that owns a section of land along a popular park trail, thereby ensuring that the trail will remain open permanently and the land won't be developed. The agreement was reached between the trust and the Bulloch Family, which owns an 880-acre property known as Simon Gulch. The property borders the eastern section of the park, including a one-mile section of the 16-mile Zion Narrows Trail. Funding for the acquisition came from the State of Utah, Washington County, the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Foundation, the George S. and Dolores Dore Eccles Foundation and other groups. Source: Carter Williams, [KSL News](#).

Briefly Noted

Other matters of interest pertaining to the parks and their people.

- *Kevin Costner Producing New TV Series On LE In The Parks* – Kevin Costner is teaming up with ABC on an hour-long “crime drama” that focuses on “the elite special agents of the [NPS] Investigative Services Branch who are tasked with solving the most complex and heinous crimes committed within the diverse and majestic National Parks of the ISB’s Pacific West region.” Source: Kevin Fraser, [JoBlo.com](#).

The Federal Government

News from around the federal government – including DOI, kindred agencies and the courts – of consequence to the NPS.

- *Locality Pay Actions* – A series of recommendations made late last year by the advisory Federal Salary Council have been endorsed by the President’s Pay Agent, which is not a person but a board comprised of the Secretary of Labor and the heads of OPM and OMB. They include two new localities, neither of them NPS hotspots but worth mentioning. Federal workers in Des Moines, Iowa, and Imperial County, California, will be the next in line to receive raises in the form of locality pay, likely beginning in 2021. Of greater interest is a recommendation that Congress reform the locality pay program and federal compensation nationwide. “We also note that the underlying methodology for locality pay, which relies on a singular locality rate to cover a locality pay area, has lacked credibility since the beginning of locality pay in 1994—to such a degree that the statutory formula for closing pay gaps has been overridden either by Congress or by successive presidents each and every year since that first year,” the report states. “[Ultimately], we believe there is need for fundamental legislative reforms of the federal compensation system. We believe it is imperative to develop performance-sensitive compensation systems that make the government more citizen-centered, results-oriented, and market-based.” Source: Eric Wagner, [Government Executive](#).
- *Court Upholds Oceanic Monument Designation* – The Associated Press has reported that a federal appeals court has upheld former President Barack Obama’s designation of a federally protected conservation area in the Atlantic Ocean, a move that commercial fishermen oppose. Fishing groups sued over the creation of Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, a 5,000-square-mile (8,000-square-kilometer) area that contains fragile deep sea corals and vulnerable species of marine life. The monument was established in 2016. A federal judge dismissed the lawsuit last year, and the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit upheld the decision on December 27th. AP summarizes the court’s findings: “The

appeals panel brushed aside arguments that federal law governing monuments applies only to land, not oceans; that the area of the ocean is not 'controlled' by the federal government; that it is not compatible with National Marine Sanctuaries Act; and that it is not the 'smallest area compatible' with management goals." Source: [Associated Press](#).

- *Court Revives Yellowstone Bison Lawsuit* – An appeals court has revived a lawsuit filed by an environmental law firm that challenged the Service's management of bison at Yellowstone, reports the Associated Press. The decision by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reverses a lower court ruling from February that dismissed the lawsuit from the Cottonwood Environmental Law Center. A three-judge appellate panel announced on December 23rd that by allowing hunting and hazing of bison, the federal government had taken actions that were a valid target of the lawsuit. The panel remanded the case to the district court for further proceedings. Source: [Associated Press](#).

Climate and Conservation

This section covers the myriad interconnected, conservation-related threats that are transforming the national parks, their ecosystems, and the world ecosphere, often simultaneously.

National and Worldwide Issues

Reports on the national and international climate and conservation crisis.

The Bad News – Reports on the national and international climate and conservation crisis.

- *Unprecedented Australian Wildfires Linked To Climate Change* – As of late last week, more than 200 fires had burned roughly 12 million acres in Australia, forcing more than 100,000 residents and tourists to flee in one of the largest evacuations in the country's history. At least 19 people have died. Navy ships have helped evacuate hundreds of people from beaches along the country's southeastern coast. The fires have been exacerbated by drought, strong winds and extreme heat – last year was the highest and driest year in the country's history and the average temperature for Australia a couple of weeks ago was a record-setting 107 degrees. Due to the world's steady warming, the number of extreme heat days in Australia has increased from nearly zero in 1910 and 1920 to an average of about 15 per year now, and the average temperature of the country has increased by three degrees Fahrenheit over 100 years. "When you have a natural pattern that's causing extreme fire danger, climate change spikes it," said a CBS meteorologist. "It enhances it, it turns extreme fire danger into catastrophic fire danger." Meanwhile, the *New York Times* has published a map showing the location and extent of the fires in Australia, plus some other graphics on rainfall and drought. Source: Nicole Brown, [CBS News](#); Nadja Popovich, Denise Lu and Blacki Miglioni, [New York Times](#).
- *World's Ecosystems Being "Fundamentally Altered"* – A survey published this fall ([The geography of biodiversity change in marine and terrestrial assemblages](#)) looked at tens of thousands of species counts from the past few decades and found that the world's ecosystems are rapidly reorganizing. "On average, more than a quarter of all plant and animal species within an ecosystem are being replaced every decade — probably the result of local extinctions, the introduction of invasive species and migrations motivated by climate change," reported the *New York Times*. "In the midst of a global environmental crisis, when an estimated 1 million species are said to be at risk of extinction, the study offers an important look at biodiversity on the level of individual ecosystems, the authors said. It suggests that for now, at least, human activities have resulted not so much in outright losses as in large-scale reorganization. But the function of ecosystems — their capacity to filter water and clean air, to sustain the plants and animals we rely on and admire — depends on the activities and health of their inhabitants. And those qualities are at risk. 'It's a little bit like we're playing musical chairs at the moment,' said macroecologist Maria Azeredo de Dornelas, a co-author on the report. 'You have a lot of things moving around, and chances are that some things are going to end up without a chair.'" Source: Sarah Kaplan, [New York Times](#).

The Good News – Reports on efforts to mitigate the national and international climate and conservation crisis.

- *Legal Action On Mandating Climate Change Action Reaches New Level* – In what may be a harbinger of things to come elsewhere in the world, the Supreme Court of the Netherlands on December 20th ordered the government to cut the nation's greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent from 1990 levels by the end of 2020 – the first time a nation has been required by its courts to take action against climate change. According to the Sabin Center for Climate Change Law at Columbia University, the decision is groundbreaking. "There have been 1,442 climate lawsuits around the world," said the center's director. "This is the strongest decision ever. The Dutch Supreme Court upheld the first court order anywhere directing a country to slash its greenhouse gas emissions." It was the third court victory in the case for the environmental group Urgenda, which filed the lawsuit in 2013 against the Dutch government with nearly 900 co-plaintiffs. Source: John Schwartz, [New York Times](#).

National Park System Issues

Climate Change – News concerning the impacts of climate change on park lands, waters, species and other assets.

- *Alaskan Parks* – Each year, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issues an [Arctic Report Card](#). This year's warns that Arctic ecosystems and communities are increasingly at risk, drawing particular attention to the Bering Sea region, where declining winter sea ice exemplifies the potential for sudden and extreme change. Echoing the [UN's Oceans and Cryosphere Report](#) from earlier this fall, the NOAA report found that the average annual land Arctic air temp for the period from October 2018 through August 2019 was the second warmest since 1900. The warming air temperatures are driving changes in the Arctic environment that have ripple effects on ecosystems and communities on a global scale. Since 1900, the Arctic has warmed more than 5 degrees Fahrenheit, which is two to three times greater than the global average. And it is even worse in Alaska, where in just the past 50 years mainland winter temperatures have surged 6 to 9 degrees Fahrenheit. Source: Monica Medina and Miro Korenha, [Our Daily Planet](#).

Native Flora and Fauna – Recent news pertaining to the protection, propagation and advancement of species now or formerly native to the national parks:

- *Badlands NP* – Bison at Badlands National Park in South Dakota are gaining 22,000 acres to roam thanks to donors who came up with nearly three-quarters of a million dollars to fence in that acreage. There are between 800 and 1,000 bison roaming the western end of the park's North Unit. While a fence has blocked them from moving east, 43 miles of fence made possible by a \$743,000 contribution from philanthropic partners will enable the park to take that blocking fence down so the bison can reach 22,000 more acres in the North Unit. Overall, the expansion of the range will bring to 80,193 acres the bison have to roam in Badlands. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#).
- *Wind Cave NP* – Twenty-nine black-footed ferrets were released into the park this past fall, adding to Wind Cave's estimated ferret population of 18 to 20 animals. The ferrets were raised at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Black-footed Ferret Conservation Center in northern Colorado. The first ferrets were reintroduced into the park in 2007. Black-footed ferrets are considered one of the rarest animals in North America. Source: Associated Press.

Invasive and Exotic Species – News on exotic or invasive species that have appeared or may soon appear in NPS areas and efforts to counter them:

- *Northern Tier Parks* – Feral pigs, long a problem in the South, are now expanding their range into the North, particularly along the Canadian border. "Feral pigs are widely considered to be

the most destructive invasive species in the United States, reports the *New York Times*. “They can do remarkable damage to the ecosystem, wrecking crops and hunting animals like birds and amphibians to near extinction.” Over the past 30 years, hogs have expanded their range to 38 states from 17, mostly through the deliberate actions of hunters seeking to create hunting opportunities. They cause massive environmental destruction, but their impacts are not limited to plants and animals. “The swine are also reservoirs for at least 32 diseases, including bovine tuberculosis, brucellosis and leptospirosis. Outbreaks of *E. coli* in spinach and lettuce have been blamed on feral hogs defecating in farm fields.” Source: Jim Robbins, [New York Times](#).

- *Olympic NP* – The numbers are in on this year’s removal of exotic mountain goats from the park. In all, 101 mountain goats were removed from Olympic National Park and Olympic National Forest to the northern Cascade Mountains. Since September 2018, a total of 275 mountain goats have been translocated. An additional two-week capture and translocation period is planned for summer 2020. The project is a partnership between the National Park Service, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Forest Service; it’s objective is to reestablish and assist in connecting depleted populations of mountain goats in the Washington Cascades while also removing non-native goats from the Olympic Mountains. Volunteers from the Point No Point Treaty Council, Quileute Tribe, Quinault Indian Nation, Makah Tribe, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, Skokomish Indian Tribe, and Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe also assisted at the staging areas in the Olympic Mountains. Source: [Sequim Gazette](#).
- *Glen Canyon NRA* – The park has completed and released a non-native aquatic species management plan with a phased approach to management of non-native fish, invertebrates and plants. The park will soon begin a public fishing program, also known as an incentivized harvest, to reduce the growing population of brown trout in the Lees Ferry area below Glen Canyon Dam. Growing populations of other non-native species, like green sunfish, are invading and threatening downstream native and endangered fish habitat. You can read more about the plan on the park’s [PEPC webpage](#). Source: [National Park Service](#).
- *Hawaii Volcanoes NP* – The Steam Vents parking lot was closed for part of a day last month for the eighth treatment cycle of invasive little fire ants since eradication efforts began in February. The trail from the lot to Wahinekapu, or Steaming Bluff, was also closed. Little fire ants pose a major threat to native species and can deliver a painful sting when disturbed. Since the park began treating the area, there’s been a 99% drop in ant detections. Source: [Honolulu Star Advertiser](#).

The Coalition

Summary of recent developments within the Coalition, including some of the actions that CNPCA took on your behalf.

- *Coalition Issues Statement on House Spending Packages* – On December 18th, the Coalition issued a statement praising the House for increasing the Service’s budget for FY 20, calling it a “bipartisan investment in our national parks and public lands.” It also applauded the increase in funding for LWCF, but expressed regret that it didn’t receive the “mandatory full funding” that it deserves. You can read the statement [at this link](#).
- *CPANP Participates In Press Conference On Oil and Gas Leasing Near Great Basin* – Member Mark Butler recently participated in a telephonic press briefing about the fourth consecutive oil and gas lease sale in Nevada, this one involving approximately 775,000 acres of public lands located in Lincoln and White Pine Counties within the scenic vistas and views of Great Basin National Park. [Click on this link](#) for both printed excerpts and an audio recording of the briefing.

Source: Emily Thompson, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator.

Park People

National Park Service Recent NPS Management Changes

Here's a listing of recent personnel changes in the NPS. Click on the links following the brief summaries for additional details:

- *Southeast Utah Group* – Superintendent Kate Cannon ended her 40-year career with the National Park Service on January 3rd. She held the position of group superintendent from 2006 until her retirement. She's retiring to join her husband, Ross Rice, a now-retired NPS ranger pilot. Source: Doug McMurdo, [The Times-Independent](#).
- *Biscayne NP* – Penelope Del Bene has been named the park's new superintendent. Del Bene will begin her new assignment in early February. Over the past five years, she's served as the chief of cultural resources for Everglades and Dry Tortugas. Source: [National Park Service](#).
- *First State NHP* – Cinda Waldbuesser is the new superintendent of First State NHP in Delaware. Waldbuesser will begin her new assignment this month. She is transferring from her current position as chief of staff in the Interior Region 1 Office in Philadelphia, where she's worked closely with parks and regional staff on a wide range of issues. Source: [National Park Service](#).
- *Wilson's Creek NB* – Ted Hillmer, who's been the park's superintendent since 2003, retired on January 3rd. The NPS has not yet named a successor. Source: Wes Johnson, [Springfield News-Leader](#).
- *C&O Canal NHP* – Tina Cappetta, who has more than 31 years of experience with the NPS, will become the park's superintendent on January 21st. She will replace Kevin Brandt, who announced his retirement last year. Brandt worked at about 20 national parks and spent his last 23 years at the C&O Canal. Cappetta is currently the superintendent of Fort McHenry NM&HS, Hampton NHS, and Star-Spangled Banner NHT, a position she's held since 2011. Source: Mike Lewis, [Hagerstown Herald and Mail](#).
- *Casa Grande Ruins NM* – Ben Littlefield has moved from his position as safety manager and acting chief of planning and project management at Redwood N&SP to become the park's new superintendent. Source: [National Park Service](#).

From The Archives

This section contains incidents taken from *National Park Service Morning Report* issues published during the corresponding week (approximately 25 years ago – that is, in 1995. All entries appear in the original verb tense; "submitters" are those people who originally submitted the incident report.

- *Grand Canyon NP* – On the afternoon of January 4th, state police asked the park for assistance on a serious motor vehicle accident which had occurred during a severe snow storm about seven miles south of the park's boundary. Twenty-one rangers in two ambulances, a fire engine, and a rescue unit responded. A Jeep Cherokee had skidded into a pickup truck, trapping three of the four family members in the Jeep. The roof of the Jeep was removed within six minutes and the occupants were extricated. The mother and five-year-old daughter died at the scene; the father and surviving daughter were transported to the park clinic along with the two passengers from the truck. The father is not expected to survive. The remaining victims have survivable injuries. A critical incident stress debriefing was conducted for all emergency service personnel. Submitted by the park.
- *Acadia NP* – On the afternoon of January 8th, a 50-year-old local climber with over 20 years of experience in technical climbs on rock and ice, fell approximately 70 feet while climbing an ice area known as "The Bulge" on Dorr Mountain. His fall could not be arrested by his climbing partner because he'd climbed too far beyond his fixed protection; he therefore fell a full pitch

before his belay came into play. Witnesses immediately went to summon rangers, who responded along with volunteer members of a local SAR association. After a difficult approach moving equipment up the ice along fixed lines, rangers and a paramedic treated and stabilized the climber, who had suffered many serious injuries, including a severed spinal cord. Good weather and daylight permitted a hoist evacuation by a helicopter from an Army medevac unit from Bangor. The climber was taken to a local hospital, where he is in serious condition. It's expected that he will suffer permanent paralysis due to his spinal injury. He probably would not have survived if the helicopter rescue had not been possible. Submitted by Chief Ranger Norm Dodge.

- *Hot Springs NP* – A twin-engine Beech aircraft crashed into West Mountain just before noon on January 10th, killing all three occupants. Two were local businessmen; the third was the pilot. Names are being withheld pending notification of next of kin. Hot Springs police, rangers, and FAA representatives were at the scene at the time of the report, and NTSB representatives were on the way. The aircraft was on an instrument flight from Natchez, Mississippi, to Hot Springs. It descended below radar coverage on its approach to Hot Springs and disappeared. Fog was obscuring the mountain tops at the time of the accident. Submitted by Chief Ranger Rod Harris.

Acknowledgements

This newsletter comes to you through the efforts of a number of people:

- Production: Steve Pittleman
- Regular Correspondents: Don Hellmann, Dennis Burnett, Rick Smith, and Duncan Morrow
- Issue Contributors: Mark Forbes, Bill Walters

If you see something that might be of interest to Coalition members, send it to Bill Halainen at the Weekly National Park System Report: BHalainen@gmail.com. Please don't submit them via his personal email address or Facebook page.

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The *Weekly National Park System Report* is a publication of The Coalition To Protect America's National Parks. It is prepared by Coalition member Bill Halainen, former editor of the *NPS Morning Report*, and produced and disseminated by Coalition member Steve Pittleman.

The Coalition is a non-profit organization of past and current NPS employees and their allies that “studies, educates, speaks, and acts for the preservation and protection of the National Park System and mission-related programs of the National Park Service.”

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