



The Coalition Weekly Report

Wednesday, April 8, 2020

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Incidents

National Park System Coronavirus Response Update

There are far too many closure and modified closure notices from the 400+ units of the National Park System to summarize here. You can, however, find specifics on the status of just about any park by going to the Service's ["Active Alerts In Parks" webpage](#) and using the search engine to find information on a particular site. We will continue to limit our reporting to a listing of articles of note on the NPS response:

- *Restricting Visitation To The Parks* – "Government officials and advocacy groups are trying to stem the tide of visitors seeking a nature fix," reports *Salon Magazine*. Some parks are being overrun with visitors, including the Grand Canyon (which finally closed down last week). Theresa Pierno, head of NPCA, gave this example, which occurred before the closure: "On a popular trail in the Grand Canyon, a ranger had 600 contacts with visitors in just one day, proving that social distancing just isn't possible, despite people's best intentions." Source: Marjie Lundstrom, [Salon](#).
- *Calls For Closing All NPS Areas Increase* – The *Grand Junction Sentinel* ran an article last week on the increasing pressure to close all parks. As of last Friday, according to NPCA, 123 NPS sites nationwide were closed, 144 had partial closures, and 20 were fully open. Phil Francis, the Coalition's chair, is cited, as are members Bruce Noble and Joan Anzelmo. Source: Christopher Tomlinson, [Grand Junction Sentinel](#).
- *"Shut Them Down"* – The April 1st edition of *Daily Beast* has a story entitled "National Park Staff Revolts, Says Shut Them Down" that talks about employee resistance to keeping some NPS areas open. "As COVID-19 continues to take its toll in the U.S, fear of exposure is leading typically rank and file national park staffers to speak out in an unusual display of agency-wide pushback to the Trump administration's ongoing policy that is keeping a majority of the more than 400 national parks open during the pandemic. Concerns are that NPS and Interior Department leadership in Washington are not taking the public health threats of coronavirus seriously, and are unfairly putting employees, visitors and the surrounding local communities at risk by continuing to keep open parks." The article goes on to talk about DOI efforts "to wrangle in outspoken employees--those who have spoken to the media or posted their frustrations online." Source: Miranda Green, [Daily Beast](#).
- *At Least Seven NPS Employees Test Positive For CV* – As of a week ago Monday, seven NPS employees had tested positive for coronavirus. Although the NPS declined to identify the

employees, other reports indicate that at least one is at Great Smokies and another at Grand Canyon. Source: Darryl Fears, Juliet Eilperin and Dino Grandoni, [Washington Post](#).

- *Wildland Fire and CV* – “As the wildland fire season draws near, federal and state officials are scrambling to modify their tactics in this new era of coronavirus concerns,” writes Larry Mayer in the *Billings Gazette*. “For now, details on how they might accomplish this are still being discussed.” The article enumerates issues and challenges. Dan Buckley, NPS fire director, is interviewed. Source: Larry Mayer, [Billings Gazette](#).

See also the Coalition’s response to the issue of allowing parks to remain open during the pandemic in the “Coalition Actions” section further on in this edition.

Golden Gate NRA

Near Drowning Victim Rescued From Stinson Beach

A 20-year-old man nearly drowned while swimming at Stinson Beach last Wednesday and needed to be airlifted to John Muir Hospital in Walnut Creek.

The man was unresponsive after being pulled from the water, but was alert and speaking by the time the medevac helicopter reached a local hospital.

Stinson Beach's parking lots are currently closed after crowds flooded the beach two weekends ago in defiance of Marin County's social distancing guidelines. The county then closed over 18,000 acres of federal, state and local parks, including the parking lots at Stinson.

The beach itself is part of the park and is technically still open. Public health officials, however, are urging individuals not to congregate at the beach.

Source: Eric Ting, [SF Gate](#).

Death Valley NP

Hiker Killed In Fall From Manly Beacon

Three hikers came upon a body near the base of Manly Beacon mountain by the Zabriskie Point trail this past weekend. Rangers and an Inyo County deputy responded and determined that the victim fell roughly 300 feet from Manly Beacon. They were unable to recover the body due to insufficient resources and time.

On Sunday, rangers, as well as search and rescue teams from the sheriff’s office and Inyo County, responded along with a CHP helicopter, which hoisted out the body and flew it to the coroner’s office.

Rangers found a rental vehicle near the Zabriskie trailhead and determined that it’d been there for about three days before the body was found.

Source: Cody Miller, [KSNV News](#).

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center

NIFC IMT’s Deployed To Support CV Response

NIFC remains at PL 1.

Eleven new large fires were reported last week in seven states – Florida, Kansas, Mississippi, Montana, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Virginia. Wildland firefighters were able to contain all of them.

NIFC has posted this statement on its main page:

“All wildland fire agencies remain committed to wildland fire readiness through active hiring of fire personnel, adjusting training practices to minimize contact and slow COVID-19 spread potential, and assessing prescribed burning operations. All wildland firefighting partners are working together to plan for fire activity during COVID-19.

“To further ensure the highest degree of readiness, the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group has established three regional Area Command Teams that will work with partners at all levels in the fire community to develop protocols for wildfire response in areas where there are known COVID-19 exposures. The protocols will be integrated into Wildland Fire Response Plans and will be available to all incident management teams and fire units to help guide effective wildfire response.”

Wildland Fire News – Stories pertaining to wildland fire and fire-related activities that involved the NPS and its fellow agencies around the globe.

- *Western Governors Seek Assistance From IMTs* – The Western Governors Association is seeking assistance from ICS-qualified teams in providing support for western rural counties and municipalities as they respond to COVID-19. Their letter to Secretary of the Interior Bernhardt, Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, and FEMA Administrator Pete T. Gaynor notes that rural communities are working to establish local emergency operation centers, but “limited staff capacity” creates challenges. “One of the most significant resources you have is the thousands of federal civil servants with relevant experience to assist with emergency response,” notes their April 1st letter, signed by WGA Chair Gov. Doug Burgum (North Dakota) and Vice Chair Gov. Kate Brown (Oregon). Source: [Western Governors Association](#).
- *Sen. Murkowski Calls For Putting Fires Out Quickly This Season* – Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), chair of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, has sent [a letter](#) to Secretaries Bernhardt and Perdue encouraging them to adopt an aggressive posture in fighting wildfires during the pandemic. “Currently, the federal government along with state and local governments across the country are mobilized to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. And now those same government entities, already stretched thin, are preparing to fight wildland fire in a world where COVID-19 still rages,” Murkowski wrote. “This problem could be particularly pronounced for regions like the Pacific Northwest and Northern California, which only received 40 percent of anticipated snowpack levels this winter.” Murkowski urged the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior to put fires out fast and early and to limit the practice of intentionally allowing some wildfires to burn on landscapes. She also encouraged the agencies to ensure a sufficient number of aircraft are available to play a greater role on initial attack and emphasized the importance of protecting the health and safety of wildland firefighters. Source: [U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources](#).

Resource Commitment Trend

Category	March 20	March 27	April 3
Area Command Teams	0	3	3
NIMO Teams	0	2	1
Type 1 Teams	0	1	1
Type 2 Teams	0	1	1
Crews	1	1	1
Engines	38	6	30
Helicopters	4	0	3
Total FF/Overhead	187	22	163

Fires/Acreage

Category	2010-2019 Ave	2020 Total	Difference

United States: YTD Fires	11,018	6,972	– 4,046
United States: YTD Acres	504,347	180,300	– 324,047

Sources: [NICC Incident Management Situation Report](#); [National Interagency Fire Center](#); [IMSR Archives](#); [InciWeb Incident Information System](#).

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

Nothing to report.

Senate Actions

The Senate was not in session last week (March 30th to April 3rd).

House Actions

With the exception of some minor business conducted on March 31st, the House was not in session last week (March 30th to April 3rd).

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.

- *Proposed E-Bike Regulation* – The NPS is seeking public input for a proposed regulation regarding the use of electric bicycles, or e-bikes, in national parks. This regulation aligns with the existing policy, which encourages parks to consider e-bike use where traditional bicycles are allowed. The proposed regulation would define the term “electric bicycle” and allow superintendents to provide for e-bike use. Visitors could use e-bikes in areas designated by the park superintendent where traditional bicycles are allowed, including public roads, parking areas, administrative roads and trails. Superintendents retain the right to limit, restrict or impose conditions on bicycle use and e-bike use in order to ensure visitor safety and protect resources. The regulation would support Secretary’s Order 3376, from August 29, 2019, which directed bureaus, including the National Park Service, to create a clear and consistent e-bike policy on all federal lands managed by DOI. The rule would also support Secretary’s Order 3366, issued April 18, 2018, that directed bureaus to increase recreational opportunities on public lands. After the proposed rule publishes, it can be found at www.regulations.gov by searching for “1024-AE61.” The public comment period will be open for 60 days ([see the draft proposed rule](#)). Source: [National Park Service](#).
- *NPS Releases Campground Industry Analysis Reports* – The NPS is currently developing a Second Century Campground Strategy. As part of this process, the Service contracted with two industry experts to develop campground industry analysis reports. The reports include an assessment of how market factors and trends may affect NPS campground markets and approaches to consider in the Service-wide campground strategy. You can find the full reports on the [NPS Advisory Board website](#). Source: [National Park Service](#).

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.

- *Glacier NP* – The park, which found itself without a shuttle operator when Flathead County officials terminated its contract in December, has found a new company to run the 35-bus operation. The contract has been awarded to LC Staffing of Kalispell, Montana. The contract, valid for up to two years, provides drivers, dispatchers, and supervisors for the park's shuttle fleet running along the Going-to-the-Sun Road. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#).
- *Golden Gate NRA* – Five applicants vying for a 20-year lease at the Travis Marina boat house and bar at Fort Baker have been invited to submit proposals to rehabilitate the historic waterfront site. The park has asked for detailed responses to the request for proposals by this summer; the intent is to have a long-term tenant in place by 2022. Source: Lorenzo Morotti, [Marin Independent Journal](#).

Commenting On NPS Projects

A listing of significant National Park Service projects which are currently open to public comment, plus due dates and URL's to related sites. Park/agency names for new entries are in **boldface**.

- *Glacier Bay NP&P* – The park's 1989 wilderness visitor use management plan will be updated this year. Comments will be taken until April 21st at [the park's PEPC webpage](#).
- ***North Cascades NP*** – The park is developing an environmental assessment to make modifications to the trail and camps in lower Thunder Creek in the Stephen Mather Wilderness. Flooding, erosion, and resource protection concerns have informed the proposed action. The preliminary proposal is to reroute 1,500 feet of trail and relocate a hiker and group camp in the vicinity of McAllister Camps on the Thunder Creek Trail. The park also proposes to construct a new administrative camp near Junction Camp another 3.5 miles up the same trail. A washed out bridge with very large steel stringers formerly used to access a closed camp would be removed by helicopter. Comments will be taken until May 1st at [the park's PEPC webpage](#).
- ***Saint Croix NSR*** – The park is seeking comments on a proposal to move the Osceola Landing boat launch. The project will address motorized and non-motorized boat use, parking and way finding, day uses, natural resource protection, messaging and interpretation. The due date for comments is April 13th; they may be made at [the park's PEPC webpage](#).

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.

- *Abnormally Warm Gulf Of Mexico Could Intensify Hurricanes, Tornadoes* – “Water temperatures in the Gulf of Mexico are running more than three degrees above average, increasing the prospects for severe thunderstorms and tornadoes this spring and potentially stronger hurricane activity in the summer and fall,” reports meteorologist Matthew Cappucci in the March 31st *Washington Post*. “The last time Gulf of Mexico waters were similarly warm in 2017, it coincided with an above-average tornado season through the spring, and then Category 4 Hurricane Harvey struck the Texas Gulf Coast at the end of summer. The balmy gulf waters have already contributed to abnormal warmth across the Deep South, where virtually the entirety of the Interstate 10 corridor through Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and

Georgia is wrapping up one of its top five warmest Marches on record. Numerous records have toppled, with some cities soaring into the 90s...There is also an increased risk of storms undergoing rapid intensification over extra-warm waters. It has been widely noted that more tropical cyclones are rapidly intensifying (their winds increasing by at least 35 mph in 24 hours), and warmer waters may be playing a role." Source: Matthew Cappucci, [Washington Post](#).

- *Greenland, Antarctica Melt Rates Now Six Times Higher Than In 90s* – "Greenland and Antarctica have lost 6.4 trillion tons of ice in the past three decades; unabated, this rate of melting could cause flooding that affects hundreds of millions of people by the end of the century," reports Doyle Rice in *USA Today*. "Satellite observations showed that the regions are losing ice six times faster than they were in the 1990s...If the current melting trend continues, the regions will be on track to match the 'worst-case' scenario of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change of an extra 6.7 inches of sea level rise by 2100." Source: Doyle Rice, [USA Today](#).

National Park System Issues

Nothing this issue.

Coalition Actions

Summary of recent developments within the Coalition, including some of the actions that CPANP took on your behalf. Links to specified documents are embedded in each entry.

- *Keeping Parks Open During Pandemic* – CPANP [has sent a letter](#) to Secretary Bernhardt expressing grave concerns that, in the midst of a pandemic, many national parks remain open. "Your inaction and failure to support the recommendations of experienced NPS managers and their local communities is putting NPS employees and local gateway community members at serious risk."
- *Protecting NPS Employees, Visitors From CV* – The Coalition has also [sent a letter](#) to Acting Director Vela, urging the NPS to demonstrate authentic concern for its employees and the public by closing the dozens of other parks that remain open, rather than wait for outside pressure before closing a park.
- *Proposed Hunting In Bandelier* – CPANP has [written a letter](#) to the chairs and ranking members of the relevant NPS oversight committees in the House and Senate commenting on [S. 2924](#), the "Bandelier National Park and Preserve Establishment Act." Specifically, we expressed our strong opposition to provisions in the bill that authorize hunting in a portion of the existing national monument, arguing that these provisions will set a dangerous precedent for the entire national park system.

Source: Emily Thompson, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator.

Park People

NPS Alumni Passing Of Dick Strange

Dick Strange, a career NPS ranger, died on April 4th.

Dick worked in a number of park across the country, including Lassen Volcanic, Organ Pipe Cactus, Big Bend, Cape Cod, and Mammoth Cave, where he retired as chief ranger in 1987.

After retirement, Richard worked and spent many days at Diamond Caverns Golf Resort in Park City, Kentucky, where he helped manage the pro shop. He spent many hours playing golf with his friends and was where his children and grandchildren learned and came to love the game of golf.

He was the father of five children: Jennifer Lynn Nelson and Theodore Max Strange, who both preceded him in death; surviving children: Carl Nicholas Strange, Debra Sue Strange and Robert Bruce Strange. He was the grandfather of 13 grandchildren and the great-grandfather of 10 great-grandchildren.

Funeral arrangements are being made by Hayes Watts & Percell Funeral Home.

Source: [Glasgow Daily Times](#).

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:

- *Grand Canyon NP* – Ed Keable, who's been the assistant solicitor of general law for the Office of the Solicitor of the Department of the Interior since March 2012, has been named the park's superintendent. Although he's worked for the federal government for 30 years, none of it has been with the National Park Service or in the field. Source: [National Park Service](#).
- *Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP/Curecanti NRA* – Deanna Greco, who's been acting superintendent of the two parks since December, has been selected as the park's superintendent. She follows Bruce Noble, who has retired. Greco has worked more than 25 years with federal land management agencies – as chief of planning and resource stewardship at Chattahoochee River, as acting superintendent there and at Jimmy Carter, as physical science program manager at Grand Canyon, as a geologist at the Geological Resources Division in Colorado, and as a park ranger with the Corps of Engineers in California. She also worked for BLM in Oregon. Source: [Grand Junction Daily Sentinel](#).

From The Archives

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

- *Little Bighorn Battlefield NM* – Richard Maniscalco, who earlier this year pled guilty in federal court to Archeological Resource Protection Act (ARPA) and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) violations stemming from thefts from the park, has been sentenced in federal magistrate's court in Alexandria, Virginia. He was sentenced to a \$500 fine and a year's probation on the charge of selling artifacts, and to a \$1,500 fine and a year's probation on the charge of trafficking in Native American remains. As a condition of his probation, Maniscalco must also reimburse the U.S. probation office for the expenses of administering his case (about \$2,100) and pay the NPS \$1,500 for repatriation of the remains, which will be transferred to the custody of the Cheyenne nation. Meanwhile, in a related case, Charles Snyder of Bowie, Maryland, has been indicted on three counts of attempting to sell artifacts taken from the battlefield and possession of stolen government property. Snyder purchased an artifact frame from Maniscalco which contained about 50 artifacts from the park, including a cavalry button, several fired bullets and casings, and a commercially-primed 50-70 caliber cartridge. Both of the arrests stem from a BLM sting operation which snared George Scott, a former seasonal ranger (two seasons) at Little Bighorn and a local school teacher, who had taken many of the artifacts and sold them to Maniscalco. Although the initial case was made by BLM investigators, Maniscalco and Snyder were tracked down and arrested by NPS special agents. Submitted by Special Agent Clark Guy.

- *Glen Canyon NRA* – Employees in the Uplake District were involved in several rescues and a medical evacuation during a period of extreme weather conditions on April 9th. Parties in two boats became separated on April 8th while en route back to Bullfrog from taking photographs of Rainbow Bridge. The party in one of the boats was assisted by other boaters in the area; the party of six in the other, including a woman who was three months pregnant, was stranded overnight. Members of the group were dressed in shorts and light clothing and were unprepared for the sudden drop in temperature, high winds and precipitation that struck the area. The boat was located from the park's aircraft and the group was rescued by rangers who had to battle severe winds and rough water. At about the same time, rangers were involved in the air evacuation of a 20-year-old man who complained of the sudden onset of acute stomach cramps and other symptoms, and the rescues of ten passengers in a runabout and the occupants of a houseboat that had run out of gas while battling strong winds and high waves. Submitted by Chief Ranger Tomie Patrick Lee.
- *Zion NP* – A 500 foot-long landslide occurred on the night of Wednesday, April 12th, causing the Virgin River to cut into and erode the road that connects the Zion Lodge with park headquarters and the main canyon. Rangers estimate that a 600-foot section of the road was destroyed by the cutting force of the river. The destruction of the road resulted in the isolation of the lodge from the rest of the park until emergency repairs were completed last night, thereby permitting about 300 guests and a number of employees to leave the lodge area, where they were confined for about 22 hours. No injuries or overdue persons have been reported. Although the seven-mile long inner canyon drive is temporarily closed, many trails are still accessible. The Kolob section of the park at Exit 40 on Interstate 15 was not affected by the slide. Submitted by PIO Denny Davies.

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- Regular Correspondents: Don Hellmann, Dennis Burnett, Rick Smith, Emily Thompson, and Duncan Morrow
- Issue Contributors: Dave Lattimore, Bill Walters, Mark Forbes, Cathy Halainen, Joan Anzelmo, Bob Martin

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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