



The Coalition Weekly Report

Wednesday, May 13, 2020

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Incidents

National Park System Coronavirus Response Update

There was little news in the media on the parks' coronavirus responses last week. Summaries and links to articles on three of them follow:

- *Glacier Bay NP* – While national parks across the country are working on their reopening plans, staff at Glacier Bay are working on a plan to survive the loss of roughly 70 percent of the park's annual budget, a loss tied to cruise ships not leaving port for the park's waters this summer. The financial hit is unique in the National Park System, where parks typically receive the bulk of their annual operating funds through Congressional appropriations. Glacier Bay, though, receives just 30 percent of its roughly \$4 million annual budget from Congress. The rest comes from cruise ship fees. The park has banked much of that revenue over the past few years and should be able to keep going through next March. The park normally hires around 70 seasonals, but will have to reduce that number to about 10 this year. The article details other impacts on Glacier Bay. Source: Kurt Repanshek, [National Parks Traveler](#).
- *Yosemite NP* – An estimated 90 shuttle bus drivers and park transportation workers who were laid off after the park closed to visitors in March are now facing eviction. The group of Yosemite Hospitality workers were told this week layoffs require them to leave Yosemite by May 21st. These are the first reported Yosemite evictions solely because of layoffs caused by the coronavirus pandemic and they come in spite of Governor Gavin Newsom's order calling for a statewide moratorium on evictions through May 31st. Source: Associated Press via [Los Angeles Times](#).
- *Great Smoky Mountains NP* – “The reopening of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park was a little too tempting of a draw Saturday as scores of nature lovers from dozens of states crowded trails and trekked into blocked-off areas, a spokeswoman said,” reports the Associated Press. “Even with some of the most popular trails closed, parking lots were packed and lines of cars snaked down tree-lined streets, in one case for about a mile leading up to a waterfall path, according to park spokeswoman Dana Soehn. Many people did not wear masks. ‘It seemed like people were not respecting our suggestion that they avoid crowded areas,’ said Soehn, adding that she counted license plates from 24 different states in one visitor center parking lot. Visitors also walked past heavy barricades on one of the park's most trafficked trails, Laurel Falls, which was closed off to heed federal social distancing guidelines, she said.” Source: [Associated Press](#).

Additional information on the pandemic response can be found at these locations:

- For articles on the reopening of the parks on a Systemwide basis, see “National Park System” below.
- For CPANP actions related to coronavirus and the planned reopenings, see “Coalition Actions” below.
- For information on the status of other parks in the system, go to the Service’s [“Active Alerts In Parks” webpage](#) and use the search engine to find information on a particular site.

Acadia NP

Woman Rescued After Fall From Cliff

On the evening of April 17th, a 19-year-old woman was rescued after falling 20 to 30 feet down an oceanside cliff at the Cooksey Drive Overlook. She was taken by the Northeast Harbor Ambulance Service to Mount Desert Island Hospital with what appeared to be non-life-threatening injuries.

The two-and-a-half-hour rescue operation involved 16 members of Mount Desert Island Search and Rescue (MDISAR) and five Acadia National Park rangers. Mount Desert police and fire personnel also responded.

The woman reportedly fell while trying to walk across a rock bridge at the overlook. Rescuers secured her in a litter and then raised her to the top of the cliff using a system of ropes and pulleys.

This was the first incident on MDI in which rescuers wore masks and took other precautions to minimize the chance of coronavirus transmission.

Source: Dick Broom, [Mount Desert Islander](#).

City of Rocks NR

Investigation Underway Into Historic Site Vandalism

Friends of Idaho State Parks has kicked off a fund to pay for restoration efforts where vandals recently tagged historic sites with spray paint.

Sometime during April 21st, vandals spray painted graffiti in black, white and pink colors over emigrant signatures and prehistoric pictographs on Camp Rock at the City of Rocks. The signatures, written with wagon wheel axle grease, were left by resting emigrants from the mid-1800s who were passing through on the California Trail. National Park Service special agents are investigating the crime.

City of Rocks and adjacent Castle Rocks State Park near Almo in south-central Idaho are overseen by both the National Park Service and Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.

The new restoration fund hopes to raise \$5,000, the estimated cost of safely removing the graffiti from the rock. The fund is named in honor of John Freemuth, a Boise State University professor and noted expert in public lands issues who recently died (see “Park People” below). To contribute to the fund, go to Friends of Idaho State Parks on Facebook at www.facebook.com/IdahoFriends/.

Source: [Idaho Falls Post Register](#).

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center

Fire Activity Remains Low Nationwide

NIFC remains at PL 1. Four large fires are currently burning nationwide.

Only one IMT – Houseman’s NIMO team – remains committed. The team has been assigned to COVID-19 support at Forest Service headquarters in Washington D.C.

National Park Service Fires

Significant fires are currently burning in these national parks:

- *Big Cypress NP* – The Moonfish Fire has burned 25,700 acres in hardwood litter and tall grass and is 10% contained. Numerous structures are threatened; evacuations, area, road and trail closures in effect.

Resource Commitment Trend

Category	April 24	May 5	May 5
Area Command Teams	3	0	0
NIMO Teams	1	1	1
Type 1 Teams	0	0	0
Type 2 Teams	0	0	1
Crews	3	0	6
Engines	64	30	134
Helicopters	6	1	18
Total FF/Overhead	495	107	876

Fires/Acreage

Category	2010-2019 Ave	2020 Total	Difference
United States: YTD Fires	19,258	14,499	– 4,750
United States: YTD Acres	951,520	317,998	– 633,522

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

April 24 – The president signed into law H.R. 266, making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, environment, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019 (Public Law 116–139). H.R. 266 was renamed and used as the vehicle for Congress to pass the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act in response to the COVID-19 (i.e., coronavirus disease 2019) outbreak by providing additional funding for small business loans, health care providers, and COVID-19 testing. All provisions passed by the House regarding appropriations for the Department of the Interior and related agencies were struck from the bill. It is anticipated that those provisions will be included in another appropriations bill later this year.

Senate Actions

May 4 – The nomination of Russell Vought, of Virginia, to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget was transmitted to the Senate.

May 6 – The Senate agreed to S. Res. 563, designating March 2020 as “National Women's History Month”.

May 6 – The Committee on Environment and Public Works approved the following:

- An original bill to provide for improvements to the rivers and harbors of the United States, to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, and to provide for water pollution control activities through the investment of \$17 billion in our infrastructure for projects across the country. Among other provisions, the bill continues efforts for the Chesapeake Bay, Everglades, Great Lakes, and San Francisco Bay restoration projects, small dam mitigation for an unnamed National Heritage Corridor in the Northeast U.S., projects to address invasive species, and projects associated with the National Estuary Program.
- An original bill to amend the Safe Drinking Water Act to reauthorize \$2.5 billion for certain Safe Drinking Water programs of the Environmental Protection Agency.

May 7 – The Senate agreed to [S. Res. 565](#), recognizing the heritage, culture, and contributions of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian women in the United States.

House Actions

Nothing to report.

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.

- *President Presses For Reopening Of Parks* – While speaking at an Earth Day celebration last week, the president said he had good news to share: “Thanks to our significant progress against the invisible enemy, I’m pleased to announce that in line with my administration’s guidelines for opening up America again, we will begin to reopen our national parks and public lands for the American people to enjoy. That’s going to be very exciting. We have a lot of land to open up, too.” Medical experts cautioned against prematurely lifting social distancing orders, especially without a significant increase in testing and contact tracing. Trump’s speech was also met with sharp pushback from advocates who have fought for weeks to get the National Park Service to close more locations. Opening too soon, they said, could come with catastrophic consequences, both for America’s landmarks as well as for the visitors who seek refuge in them. Source: Gabrielle Canon and Mark Olalde, [USA Today](#).
- *Privatizing The Parks* – *National Geographic* has posted a story to its webpage on the push to privatize national parks and the potential consequences. “The cash-strapped National Park Service is saddled with a nearly \$12 billion maintenance backlog; the recreation industry has said it can manage some park services better and cheaper.” It goes on to present both sides of the privatization argument and concludes with an observation that no action on the subject is likely in the near future: “[It] will take time, manpower, a new contract template for concessionaires, and opportunity for public comment – presently a challenge, as such meetings are being postponed because of coronavirus.” Source: Adina Solomon, [National Geographic](#).

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.

- *Grand Teton NP* – Construction will begin this spring at Pacific Creek Landing on the Snake River. The project is one of three river access site improvements meant to enhance the visitor experience, improve safety, restore the resilience of riparian areas, improve infrastructure, and emphasize accessibility for all. The other two projects, at Jackson Lake Dam and Moose Landing, will be done in the next few years. Pacific Creek Landing, located just north of the Moran area, will be temporarily closed to all river users and visitors during construction activities this spring and in the fall. There will be summer access to the site after June 7th contingent upon a reopening of the park per public health guidelines. It is anticipated that a temporary closure will be in effect this fall beginning September 1st, and possibly into spring of 2021. Source: [Billings Gazette](#).
- *Vicksburg NMP* – Archaeologists are recovering the remains of unidentified Civil War soldiers from a collapsed section of Vicksburg National Cemetery. The collapse happened in February. The remains of about 15 Union soldiers are being unearthed from graves that were part of the collapse or that are in an unstable area. The material will be stored so each soldier's remains are kept together, and DNA testing may be needed. The remains will be buried again in the 116-acre cemetery. About 17,000 Union soldiers are buried there, and about 75% of them are unidentified. Source: [The Telegraph](#).
- *Zion NP* – The park is seeking to develop a warning system for the flashfloods that regularly occur – often without warning – in its many slot canyons, 600 of them parkwide. It's seeking help in creating one from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Sacramento District. While Zion currently uses a color-coded Flash Flood Potential system inside the visitor's center, many visitors simply do not see it, especially if they bypass the center or are accessing the slot canyons with an outfitter. The park's current system is a four-color rating system, with yellow representing the safest end of the spectrum and red indicating the highest danger. Zion has also used a warning system that sends messages to those using Twitter, and the National Weather Service pushes flood warning notifications to cell phones. But there is often no reception available for those who are already deep within the canyons. Due to the continually increasing popularity of Zion over the years, the need for risk-messaging has become much more urgent. According to park attendance figures, the park hosted approximately 500,000 visitors annually in 1960. By 2019, visits to the park topped 4,400,000, and permits for canyoneering day trips had risen to more than 38,000. Source: [Army Corps of Engineers](#).

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**.

- *Cape Hatteras NS* – The park is preparing an EA for a sediment management framework that will include certain sediment management activities implemented by the seashore and by local jurisdictions, state agencies, and other federal agencies. [Comments may be made until May 10th](#).
- ***Cape Hatteras NS*** – The park is adopting an EA prepared by the Corps of Engineers for a special use permit to authorize Dare County to dredge Oregon Inlet. The project is needed to maintain safe "best water" navigation on a year-round basis within the confines of Oregon Inlet and certain connecting channels from the sounds to the Atlantic Ocean for park visitors, county and federal agencies, commercial fishing industry, and the community. [Comments are being accepted until May 25th](#).
- *Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania NMP* – The National Parks Air Tour Management Act of 2000, as amended, requires that all persons conducting or intending to conduct a commercial air tour operation over a unit of the National Park system apply to the FAA for authority to undertake such activity. Helmet and Goggles Adventures, Inc., a fixed-wing tour operator, has requested permission to conduct tours over the park. As part of the air tour voluntary

agreement process, a 30 day public review and comment period must occur prior to the execution of the agreement. [Comments will be taken until May 17th.](#)

- *Great Smoky Mountains NP* – Great Smokies is seeking public feedback on several transportation and recreation planning efforts that will address visitor access, safety, transportation, and recreation in the Sevier County portion of the park. [Comments can be made on the relevant documents until May 22nd.](#)
- *Lake Roosevelt NRA* – The park is in the process of evaluating potential management strategies for improving visitor experience at nine priority sites – Evans, Marcus Island, Kettle Falls, Keller Ferry, Spring Canyon, Porcupine Bay, Gifford, Hunters and Fort Spokane. [Comments are being taken on the plan through May 30th.](#)

The Federal Government

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

- *Update On Trump Efforts To Rollback Environmental Regs* – Some time ago, we carried an article from the *New York Times* that listed all the environmental regulations that the administration had or was trying to rollback. On May 6th, the *Times* ran an update on that list, which includes “nearly 100 environmental rules.” Here’s the introduction to the listing: “After three years in office, the Trump administration has dismantled most of the major climate and environmental policies the president promised to undo. Calling the rules unnecessary and burdensome to the fossil fuel industry and other businesses, his administration has weakened Obama-era limits on planet-warming carbon dioxide emissions from power plants and from cars and trucks, and rolled back many more rules governing clean air, water and toxic chemicals. Several major reversals have been finalized in recent weeks as the country has struggled to contain the spread of the new coronavirus. In all, a *New York Times* analysis, based on research from Harvard Law School, Columbia Law School and other sources, counts more than 60 environmental rules and regulations officially reversed, revoked or otherwise rolled back under Mr. Trump. An additional 34 rollbacks are still in progress.” The article provides a detailed listing of all of them; each entry includes a link for more information. Source: Nadja Popovich, Livia Albeck-Ripka, and Kendra Pierre-Louis, [New York Times](#).
- *More Than 10,000 Federal Employees Have Contracted COVID-19* – The April 28th issue of *Government Executive* provides a summary on the numbers of federal workers who’ve tested positive for coronavirus – a total of about 10,000 at that time. The article breaks the number down by department. “While most federal employees are still teleworking,” writes Eric Katz, “many agencies have missions that cannot be performed remotely and hundreds of thousands of federal workers continue reporting to their work stations. Federal offices, like those in all sectors in the country, have struggled to keep their employees safe. Workers have complained of insufficient protective supplies, equipment and distancing policies. The total number of positive cases within the federal workforce has more than quadrupled since early April.” Source: Eric Katz, [Government Executive](#).

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.

- *CPANP Video* – The Coalition has produced [a new, short video](#) introducing CPANP to a broad audience, including potential new members, media outlets and donors. It succinctly summarizes who we are and will hopefully serve to open new links to other organizations and people.

- *CV And Reopening The Parks* – The Coalition issued [a statement about park reopenings](#) that included [ten principles \(or requirements\) that should be implemented before parks open up to the public](#). We also circulated these to partner groups who were looking for talking points from our perspective.
- *Washington Post Article* – The Post ran [a story on the issue of premature reopening](#) that cited the Coalition and chairman Phil Francis.

Source: Emily Thompson, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator.

Park People

NPS Alumni Passing Of Mike Warren

Mike Warren, former NPS structural fire chief in the 2000s and FMO in Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks from the late 1980s to mid-1990s, passed away on Monday morning from injuries incurred from a fall.

No obituary or details on memorial or funeral services are yet available – they’ll be posted in the next issue. If you would like to send a condolence or card to his wife, the address is Joy Warren, 2750 S Merrimac, Boise, ID 83709.

Source: Tina Boehle, Fire and Aviation Management

NPS Alumni Death Of John Freemuth

John Freemuth, 69, an expert on public land and environmental policy issues, died of a heart attack on May 2nd.

Freemuth was a professor of public policy at Boise State University, where he also had strong ties to the Andrus Center for Public Policy, a nonprofit founded by Cecil Andrus in 1995 to foster “common sense” discussion on policy issues.

Freemuth grew up in California, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in politics from Pomona College in 1972. He spent time in the 1970s working for the Internal Revenue Service, as a National Park Service ranger at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area in southern Utah, and as a high school teacher and cross-country coach. In 1986, Freemuth graduated from Colorado State University with a doctorate in politics and government.

From there, Freemuth moved on to the position at Boise State. There, he served as the Cecil Andrus endowed chairman for environment and public lands and wrote numerous articles and books on public lands issues, particularly as they pertained to the Western U.S. He taught many courses and served as a mentor for hundreds of students, many of whom went on to prominent roles in politics and conservation in Idaho.

Freemuth is survived by his wife, Sheri, and two sons. See the article below for a number of tributes to him.

Source: Nicole Blanchard, [Idaho Statesman](#).

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.

- *Glen Canyon NRA* – Four local Page residents were overcome by carbon monoxide while towing an empty boat belonging to one of the victims from Navajo Canyon to Wahweap Marina on the evening of May 5th. The tow boat's full canvas cover was buttoned down except for the rear section, which allowed the strong winds blowing at the time to funnel engine exhaust into the boat. When the two boats were found aground on Antelope Island the next morning, the ignition on the tow boat was still on and the gas tank was empty, suggesting that the jet outdrive engine had continue to run after grounding and had forced carbon monoxide into the interior of the boat. All four occupants were suffering from acute carbon monoxide poisoning, and one, Joe Premeaux, 68, had no vital signs. He never regained consciousness. The other three were air evacuated to a decompression chamber in Salt Lake City. Although in serious condition, all have since recovered and been released. Submitted by Chief Ranger Tomie Lee.
- *Yellowstone NP* – Gayle Mason, 41, an employee of TW Recreational Services from West Linn, Oregon, was jogging near the Morning Glory pool trail just after noon on May 14th when she surprised a cow bison with a newborn calf. The bison charged Mason, knocked her down and trampled her. Mason suffered a severe head laceration and other injuries. Rangers transported her to the park clinic by ambulance; she was then air evacuated to a hospital in Idaho Falls. At last report, she was in stable condition. Submitted by Assistant Chief Ranger Mike Murray.
- *Zion NP* – On the morning of May 16th, Joshua Heiner, Erik Stevenson, and Michelle Smith, all 19 years old, rappelled into Pine Creek Canyon, a technical canyoneering route that begins near the east entrance of Zion Tunnel. They soon discovered that they were not prepared for existing water conditions, and that they could not extricate themselves from the canyon. They were trapped on a portion of the route near the popular Canyon Overlook trail, however, and a visitor heard and reported their calls for help. Responding rangers conducted a technical rescue and evacuated the trio. A thunderstorm struck the area as ranger Dave Buccello and the last of the three victims were being lifted from the narrow, slot canyon floor; while they were hanging on the rescue rope at the midpoint of the 150-foot canyon wall, a flash flood covered the canyon floor. It is certain that all three would have died if they hadn't been rescued. Submitted by Chief Ranger Steve Holder.

Acknowledgements

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- Production: Steve Pittleman
- Regular Correspondents: Don Hellmann, Dennis Burnett, Rick Smith, Emily Thompson, and Duncan Morrow
- Issue Contributors: Mark Forbes, Cathy Halainen, Roberta D'Amico, 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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salaried employee (GS, wage grade, seasonal, temporary, or SES) of the National Park Service can join the Coalition ([click on this link](#)). Coalition supporters can also join and receive the newsletter ([click on this link](#)). If you need to contact the Coalition office on other matters, including changes of address, [click on this link](#).

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