



The Coalition Weekly Report

Wednesday, June 3, 2020

Volume 4

Number 19

Incidents

National Park System Parks Begin Reopening From Pandemic Closures

This week's update consists of a random sampling of reports on park reopenings extracted from various news source:

- *Zion NP* – Memorial Day weekend was busy. The park was full and turning away visitors by 7 a.m. on Saturday; one visitor described the scene as “hectic.”
- *Joshua Tree NP* – The park was so packed on Memorial Day weekend that people were pitching tents on the side of the road and in day-use-only areas. Many of the license plates were from out of state. Most people were not wearing masks or staying six feet apart on trails
- *Rocky Mountain NP* – The park has begun implementation of a “timed entry” system in order to spread out crowds by giving people a specific time slot when they’re allowed to enter the park.
- *Glacier NP* – The park’s phased reopening plans will align with Montana’s as the state adjusts to certain COVID-19 restrictions. Visitor service operations will start conservatively and will be expanded if conditions allow. The decision to reopen the park is largely based on the recommendations provided by county health departments, the Blackfeet Nation, and the State of Montana.
- *Olympic NP* – All coastal areas remain closed to all park visitors until further notice. The coastal area closures include all public areas, trails, beaches, and facilities at Kalaloch, Mora and Ozette.
- *North Cascades NP* – A limited reopening is underway. The three popular overlooks along the North Cascades Highway – Diablo Lake, Ross Lake, and Gorge Creek Falls overlooks – reopened on Friday. The park system's trails have reopened, but for day use only: The Stehekin marina and public docks at the head of Lake Chelan have reopened for day use only. So have boat launching facilities on Diablo and Ross Lakes.

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.

Sources: Krista Langlois, [National Geographic](#); [KTVH News](#); [KOMO News](#).

Yellowstone NP

Woman Burned After Falling Into Thermal Area

A woman suffered burns after falling into a thermal feature near Old Faithful last Tuesday. She had illegally entered the park, which was closed to visitors at the time.

The woman told rangers that she was backing up to take pictures when she fell into a thermal feature at the Old Faithful Geyser. She was able to get in her vehicle and drive through the park until contacted by rangers. Due to her injuries, she was life-flighted to the Burn Center at Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center. Rangers are not sure which thermal feature she fell into; the investigation continues.

Earlier this year, two men who were caught trespassing on the cone of Old Faithful were sentenced to ten days in jail and five years of probation. They were also ordered to pay \$540 in restitution and banned from the park for five years. Last year, a man suffered severe burns when he took a walk off the boardwalk at night without a flashlight and tripped into the thermal water near the cone of Old Faithful Geyser. In June 2017, a North Carolina man suffered severe burns when he fell into a hot spring in the Lower Geyser Basin; a year before that, an Oregon man died when he went off a boardwalk and fell into a hot spring that was 212 degrees Fahrenheit. His body was not recovered.

Source: [CNN via ABNC-57 News](#).

Lake Mead NRA Twelve Rescued After Boat Capsizes

Twelve people, including a three-year-old girl, were rescued on the night of Sunday, May 10th, after their 20-foot boat capsized on Lake Mead.

Rangers and Nevada Department of Wildlife wardens responded to a 911 call around 7:15 p.m. near Swallow Bay. They secured the boat and rescued the passengers from the water. The three-year-old was rescued from an air pocket under the boat.

Hours earlier, some boaters and kayakers got stranded in the water during a storm, and many people got their cars stuck in the mud trying to leave the beaches afterward. Rangers responded to more than 80 incidents overall on Sunday, including ten requiring search and rescues operations.

The park said that strong winds and flash floods contributed to many of Sunday's incidents.

Source: Alexis Egeland, [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#).

Cuyahoga Valley NP Man Arrested For Plan To Murder Rangers, Other Officers

On May 8th, Christian Ferguson, 20, was taken into custody without incident by rangers and agents from the FBI's Cleveland Division.

Ferguson was identified after engaging in several violent and extremist postings made on the cross-platform communication application Discord. Over several weeks, Ferguson discussed his desire to call police to report a false crime was in progress to prompt a response by law enforcement. Specifically, he expressed an interest in a response by federal law enforcement because he believed they had better quality firearms and body armor to steal. He made statements about tactical options for killing multiple targets and the disposal of their bodies. He reaffirmed his plan to ambush law enforcement, kill them, rob them of their weapons, and start an uprising.

As a result of the conversations in the Discord chatrooms controlled by Ferguson, he met on several occasions with individuals to further discuss his plan in order to see it to fruition. Ferguson then engaged in practice drills with an AR-15 rifle and on one occasion conducted reconnaissance in a dry run. He ultimately facilitated a hoax distress call within the boundaries of the park to gauge response time by park rangers. Ferguson believed four federal officers arrived and indicated that if that many

officers respond to the real event, they would likely have to kill them all. The FBI was able to successfully monitor these meetings.

Ferguson has been charged with attempted kidnapping. The case was investigated by rangers, Cuyahoga Falls Police Department officers, members of the City of Cuyahoga Falls Prosecutor's Office, and agents from the Cleveland Division of the FBI. It's being prosecuted by the United States Attorney's Office-Northern District of Ohio.

Source: Special Agent Vicki Anderson-Gregg, [FBI Cleveland](#).

Systemwide Holiday Weekend Drownings – And A Save

Every year, particularly on holiday weekends, people drown unnecessarily in national parks through lack of preparedness or swimming in hazardous areas. Here are several from Memorial Day weekend, plus a rescue at Cape Hatteras two weeks ago:

- *Buffalo River NR* – A 16-year-old boy drowned while attempting to swim across the Buffalo River on May 25th. The teenager was swimming in a "deep and swift" current at Grinder's Ferry. Witnesses said that he began struggling as he swam, went underwater as he neared the other side of the river, and never resurfaced. He was not wearing a life jacket. An interagency dive team found his body in 10 to 15 feet of swift and murky water that evening. Source: [Arkansas Democrat Gazette](#).
- *Lake Meredith NRA* – On the afternoon of Saturday, May 23rd, Ascencion Fernandez and his daughter were on a boat in the lake near Cedar Canyon when his daughter fell overboard. Fernandez jumped into the water without a lifejacket to help her, when he began drowning with nobody around. He was in the water for a while before he was rescued and CPR was administered. The National Park Service, game wardens and Hutchinson County Sheriff's deputies helped drive him to the ranger station, where he died. His daughter survived. Source: [KFDA News](#).
- *Little River Canyon NP* – Two men drowned in high waters last week; a third had to be rescued from the river on Memorial Day. Due to strong water currents, sharp and slippery rocks, and a 43-foot cliff, drowning is the leading cause of death in the park. The river was flowing at 2,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) in one incident and 800 cfs in the other. Sources: Kate Smith, [WAFF News](#); Travis Cummings, [WCRB News](#).
- *Cape Hatteras NS* – Visitor Jeffrey Del Monte was driving an off-road vehicle with his wife and a friend late on the afternoon of May 16th when they heard children's screams coming from the beach. They looked out to the water to try to find where the screams were coming from and spotted two young girls apparently caught in a rip current. Del Monte swam out and helped one of the girls out of the rip current and his friend swam her back to shore. He then found the other "in distress" and swam her back to the beach from about 100 yards offshore. The two rescuers cared for the children on the beach until a ranger and Dare County EMS arrived. "Jeffrey Del Monte's heroic, selfless, and prompt actions were critical to saving these two girls from a very dangerous situation," said David Hallac, superintendent of National Parks of Eastern North Carolina. Source: Baily Aldridge, [News & Record](#).

Colonial NHP Two Killed In Crash On Parkway

Two people died on the morning of Monday, May 11th, in a single-vehicle crash on the Colonial Parkway in York County.

The park got a call from York County dispatch around 1:40 a.m. regarding an accident on the parkway near the I-64 overpass. That's where an ongoing construction project is underway to widen the interstate.

The vehicle was on fire, dispatchers said. The York County Department of Fire and Life Safety arrived and determined two people in the vehicle had died. An investigation is in progress.

Source: Saleen Martin, [Virginian-Pilot](#).

Cape Cod NS Coyote Kills Dog, Injures Woman In Unprovoked Attacks

A coyote indifferent to being shot by paint balls was shot and killed by rangers after acting aggressively around people and killing a puppy that was let off leash.

Coyotes had been congregating at the seashore's Herring Cove Beach since March, looking for dog food and fish heads that visitors had left for them. Recently the wild animals have become emboldened in their search for food. Last Saturday a woman was bitten by a coyote, and on Memorial Day one of the animals killed a puppy, prompting the rangers to destroy it.

"No one wants to have their day at the national seashore end in this manner, and our rangers take no pleasure in killing a wild animal," Cape Cod Superintendent Brian Carlstrom said in the aftermath of the shooting Monday. "Unfortunately, scenes like this play out frequently in national parks. People don't understand the implications of approaching or feeding wildlife, often leading to tragic consequences for the public and the animals."

The park has stepped up signage, social media messaging, and patrols to warn the public about coyotes, and Provincetown officials also provided warnings that people should keep their distance from the wild animals. In recent days rangers had tried to haze coyotes away from the beach, in part by shooting them with paint balls; an approach intended to both instill a fear of humans in the animals and also for identification purposes.

The coyote killed Monday was identified through paintball markings made during efforts in recent days to scare the animal away.

The park has reminded the public that it is illegal to feed, disturb, or harass wildlife in national parks. Animals that are fed often lose their fear of people, becoming unpredictable and aggressive in attempts to gain food. This can lead to serious injury to people and destruction of the wild animal. In addition, feeding draws more animals in, resulting in unnaturally high populations, competition for human-provided food, and aggressive behavior.

Source: [National Parks Traveler](#).

Theodore Roosevelt NP Bison Put Down After Attacking Hiker

A 55-year-old woman was hiking around a bend along the Buckhorn Trail between 3:30 and 4 p.m. on Monday, May 18th, when she encountered a bison on the trail. The bison charged her, striking her in the face and knocking her down. The woman managed to call 911 while on the ground as the bison stood 10 to 15 feet away.

The responding ranger found the bison still standing near the woman. The bison demonstrated increasing signs of aggression and did not respond to attempted hazing measures. The ranger was forced to shoot the animal to prevent further injury to the hiker.

Park staff, McKenzie County Sheriff's Office deputies and McKenzie County Emergency Medical Services personnel treated the hiker at the scene. She was taken via helicopter to a hospital in Monday and released later that night, having suffered broken vertebrae and multiple facial fractures. Park staff remind visitors that bison are large, powerful and fast-moving. Despite their docile appearance, they are wild and can be startled by humans, especially when encountered at close range. The park requires visitors to stay at least 25 yards away from bison, elk, deer and horses.

Source: [Dickinson Press](#).

Yellowstone NP Woman Injured After Getting Too Close To Bison

A visitor was injured in a bison attack last Wednesday.

The incident occurred in the Old Faithful Upper Geyser Basin when the woman got too close to the animal. The bison reacted by charging her.

The extent of the woman's injuries were not known at the time of the report, but she'd declined to be taken to a hospital.

The park reiterated its standing guidance: "When an animal is near a trail, boardwalk, parking lot, or in a developed area, give it space. Stay 25 yards (23 m) away from all large animals - bison, elk, bighorn sheep, deer, moose, and coyotes and at least 100 yards (91 m) away from bears and wolves."

The attack is under investigation.

Source: Dennis Romero, [NBC News](#).

Glen Canyon NRA Man Killed In Fall Into Canyon

An Arizona man camped out in a remote area of the park on the night of May 13th fell about 70 feet to his death.

Ian Brisbin, 26, and a friend had gone out to Alstrom Point, west of Gunsight Bay, to spend Wednesday night. The point is a popular location for photographers wanting to take pictures of Lake Powell. It's located in a remote area of Kane County that overlooks Gunsight Bay and Padre Bay.

The Kane County Sheriff's Office received a call reporting the death the next morning. The caller said that the two had camped on the point on May 13th. The caller had gone to bed after midnight, while Brisbin stayed up to watch the stars. When the caller woke the morning of the 14th, he was unable to locate Brisbin. He eventually looked over to the edge of the cliff and noticed some belongings. Ian's body was then located about 70 feet below.

Rope rescue personnel from Kane County Sheriff's Search and Rescue and the National Park Service worked together to raise the man's body to the top of the cliff. The death appears to have been accidental.

Source: [National Parks Traveler](#).

National Park System Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents

Below are short follow-ups on incidents previously reported in this newsletter.

- *Yellowstone NP* – The man who had to be rescued by rangers after illegally rappelling into the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone last winter has received multiple penalties for his actions. David Christensen, 55, must serve a week in jail, reimburse the National Park Service more than \$4,000 for the expense of getting him out of the canyon, and stay out of Yellowstone National Park for the next five years. Christensen told the judge who presided over his case that he has no plans of ever returning to Yellowstone and apologized for what he did. However, he continues to "firmly believe" that Forrest Fenn's famed treasure is stashed on the canyon floor. Fenn published a riddle in 2010 that, he says, lays out the location of gold and jewels he stashed somewhere in the Rocky Mountain region. Thousands have looked for it; several have

died in the process. In sentencing Christensen, the judge said he'd engaged in "highly reckless behavior." Source: CJ Baker and Mark Davis, [Casper Star Tribune](#).

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center Large Fire Activity Picks Up

NIFC remains at PL 1. Large fire activity picked up over last weekend, with a dozen new large fires reported on Monday. The 14 large fires currently active have burned more than 63,000 acres in nine states.

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:

- *Channel Islands NP* – The Scorpion Fire has burned 1,395 acres in short grass and brush. It's 90% contained,
- *Everglades NP* – The Guava Fire has burned 27,940 acres and is 30% contained. As of Monday, 36 firefighters and overhead personnel were assigned to the blaze. It's burning in brush and grass.

Resource Commitment Trend

Category	May 12	May 26	June 2
Area Command Teams	0	0	0
NIMO Teams	1	1	1
Type 1 Teams	0	0	1
Type 2 Teams	1	0	0
Crews	6	9	16
Engines	134	55	47
Helicopters	18	5	11
Total FF/Overhead	876	403	635

Fires/Acreage

Category	2010-2019 Ave	2020 Total	Difference
United States: YTD Fires	22,258	19,762	- 2,496
United States: YTD Acres	1,161,342	439,422	- 721,920

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 in recess last week for the Memorial Day holiday.

House Actions

May 28 – The House observed a moment of silence in remembrance of the over 100,000 Americans who have passed away from the COVID-19 virus.

May 28 – The Committee on Education and Labor Subcommittee on Workforce Protections held a hearing entitled “Examining the Federal Government's Actions to Protect Workers from COVID-19”. Testimony was heard from Loren Sweatt, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Department of Labor; and John Howard, M.D., Director, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services.

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.

- *Video Pays Tribute To Rangers Who Died In Line Of Duty* – The NPS has produced an excellent eight-and-a-half minute video remembering and commemorating the line of duty ranger deaths from across the Service’s history. Photos of each ranger are shown, often with their families. Members of the NPS honor guard and rangers at parks across the nation are shown saluting them in silence, with a soundtrack consisting of “Taps” on trumpet and “Amazing Grace” first on bagpipes and then on trumpet. It’s called “We Salute Your Service. We Will Never Forget The Sacrifice” and [can be seen at this link](#). Source: National Park Service.
- *New NPS Regs End Ban On Controversial Bear, Wolf Hunts In Alaska* – “The National Park Service is rescinding a ban within Alaska’s national preserves on some controversial state-sanctioned predator harvests of bears and wolves,” reports KUAC News in Fairbanks. “NPS Alaska spokesperson Pete Christian says although practices like killing bears and wolves in dens run counter to the Park Service’s mission, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, which created or expanded many of Alaska’s national preserves, grants the state management authority. ‘It supersedes, to some extent, the NPS Organic Act and some of our regular management policies, and so the parks up here were designed to have preserve units in them which allow for hunting and trapping as per state law,’ Christian said. The Park Service decision to defer to the state is the latest move in a legal conflict that dates back to when the previous federal administration initially banned certain state-permitted predator harvests on Alaska’s preserve lands.” Source: Dan Bross, [KUAC News](#).
- *Rule Proposed To Revise Water Jurisdiction Regs In Alaska Region* – The region has proposed a rule that would revise NPS regulations to comply with the decision of the Supreme Court in *Sturgeon v. Frost*. In the *Sturgeon* decision, the court held that National Park Service regulations apply exclusively to public lands (meaning federally owned lands and waters) within the external boundaries of National Park System units in Alaska. Lands which are not federally owned, including submerged lands under navigable waters, are not part of the unit subject to the National Park Service's ordinary regulatory authority. Comments are being taken until June 29th. Source: [Regulations.gov](#).

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.

- *Kennesaw NBP* - Cobb County has been developing an innovative trail marker program that reached a milestone when markers were installed along 21 miles of park trails. The arrangement between the county and the National Park Service is one of the first of its kind in the country and should lead to faster response times by Cobb first responders when people are lost, hurt, or need help on the federal trails. Source: Ross Cavitt, [Cobb County.org](#).
- *Yosemite NP* – The [Forest History Society](#) has published a short piece commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Stoneman Meadow riots. Its subtitle: “In 1970, tensions between young campers and National Park Service employees in Yosemite boiled over and turned violent. The series of confrontations led to changes in how the Park Service viewed and handled law enforcement in the popular national park.” It’s available as a seven-page PDF file. Source: Michael Childers, [Forest History Today](#).

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 names appear in **boldface** for new entries.

- *Grand Teton NP* – The concessions contract between the park and Grand Teton Lodge Company will expire on December 31, 2021. The NPS is considering what visitor services to require or authorize in the next concessions contract, which has an anticipated effective date of January 1, 2022. An EA is being prepared that will examine potential new construction and facility improvements that may be included in the prospectus. Improvements would include constructing additional concession employee housing, installing fire protection enhancements, improving accessibility improvements, adding amenities at campgrounds, reconfiguring food and beverage services, and relocating a concessioner-operated warehouse. [You can comment on the project through June 22nd](#).
- *Hawaii Volcanoes NP* – The park will be undertaking a project to repair and/or replace critical park infrastructure and U.S. Geological Survey-operated facilities damaged during the 2018 eruption and summit collapse of Kilauea volcano. The project will include plans for visitor service and administrative sites and addresses potential future use of the Uēkahuna Bluff area. [Comments may be made until June 15th](#).
- *Mesa Verde NP* – The park is seeking public comment on an environmental assessment to evaluate the impacts of improving the existing Mesa Top Loop Roads and the intersection at the entrance of Mesa Verde National Park. [The comment period is open until June 19th](#).
- ***Voyageurs NP*** – The park is taking comments on a site development plan for the Kettle Falls area. The plan will consider improvements to recreational amenities, accessibility, wayfinding, and overnight visitor opportunities, and improvements to housing options for staff in the area while assuring the on-going protection of natural and cultural resources. The plan is needed to identify site improvements such as access for boats, houseboats, and seaplanes; additional concession staff housing and visitor overnight lodging; trails and other day-use amenities; or other amenities within a historic landscape. [Comments will be taken until July 10th](#).
- ***Yellowstone NP*** – The park seeks additional comments from the public about the impacts a wi-fi proposal may have on Yellowstone National Park’s historic properties or other cultural resources. The proposal from AccessParks includes the installation of indoor wi-fi networks and associated equipment for park visitors and employees at select park lodging facilities and employee housing. Last November, the park asked for public comment on affects to historic

properties from a proposal by AccessParks. At the time of the original announcement, typical photo-simulations of a limited number of installations were included for public comment. On March 18th, AccessParks released a proposal that showed significantly more photo-simulations of the proposed installations. The new document with photo simulations is available in the document list section of this website. [Comments can be made through June 10th.](#)

Briefly Noted

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

- *Best Photos Of National Parks – Conde Nast Traveler* has posted a piece to its website entitled “The Most Beautiful Photo We Could Find of Every U.S. National Park.” They originally ran the list in 2017, but this one includes updated images: “White sand beaches, swamps, stalagmite-filled caves, glaciers, hot springs you can swim in (and ones you definitely can’t), rainforests, scorching deserts, volcanoes (dormant and active): The national parks scattered throughout the United States and its territories truly have it all. And while the 62 recognized parks only make up a fraction of the 419 sites that comprise the National Park Service, they represent some of the finest natural environments America has to offer.” Click on the following link to see the images. Source: Caitlin Morton, [Conde Nast Traveler](#).
- *Best Night Sky Photos* – The website Space.com has a gallery of images from their readers’ favorite sky watching locations. Although the photos are from all over, some of the best are from locations in national parks – Signal Mountain in Grand Teton, Eureka Dunes in Death Valley, Tenaya Lake in Yosemite, Hunter’s Beach in Acadia, and the Statue of Liberty. Each is accompanied by a short narrative. Source: Elizabeth Howell, [Space.com](#).

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.

- *Arctic ‘Zombie Fires’ Indicate Possible Severe Arctic Fire Season* – “The bitterly cold Arctic winter typically snuffs out the seasonal wildfires that erupt in [the Arctic],” writes Andrew Freedman in the *Washington Post*. “But every once in a while, a wildfire comes along that refuses to die. These blazes, known as ‘zombie fires’ or ‘holdover fires,’ can burrow into the rich organic material beneath the surface, such as the vast peatlands that ring the Arctic, and smolder under the snowpack throughout the frigid winter. With the Siberian Arctic seeing record warm conditions in recent weeks and months, scientists monitoring Arctic wildfire trends are becoming more convinced that some of the blazes erupting in the Arctic this spring are actually left over from last summer.” The drying and burning of Arctic peatlands has major consequences for the planet as a whole because northern peatlands contain more stored carbon than rainforests do. They smolder during the winter without flames, only to reignite in the spring. Source: Andrew Freedman, [Washington Post](#).
- *Report Released On Increase In Combined Extreme Humidity And Heat* – A [study by The Earth Institute at Columbia University](#) published on May 8th in the journal *Science Advances* reports that the combined effect of extreme heat and humidity (known as the “wet bulb index”) is already exceeding in some locations for short durations of time the level that scientists thought would be the threshold of human survivability. A wet-bulb temperature (TW) of 35°C marks our upper physiological limit, and much lower values have serious health and productivity impacts. Climate models project the first 35°C TW occurrences by the mid-21st century, but a comprehensive evaluation of weather station data shows that some coastal subtropical locations have already reported a TW of 35°C and that extreme humid heat overall has more

than doubled in frequency since 1979. Recent exceedances of 35°C in global maximum sea surface temperature provide further support for the validity of these dangerously high TW values. “We find the most extreme humid heat is highly localized in both space and time and is correspondingly substantially underestimated in reanalysis products,” they conclude. “Our findings thus underscore the serious challenge posed by humid heat that is more intense than previously reported and increasingly severe.” Source: [Our Daily Planet](#).

National Park System Issues

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

- *Western Parks* – A [recently-released study](#) has revealed that the western United States – extending from California, Arizona and New Mexico north to Oregon and Idaho – is in the grips of the first climate change-induced megadrought observed in the past 1,200 years. “The finding means the phenomenon is no longer a threat for millions to worry about in the future,” says the *Washington Post*, “but is already here...Unlike historical megadroughts triggered by natural climate cycles, emissions of heat-trapping gases from human activities have contributed to the current one, the study finds. Warming temperatures and increasing evaporation, along with earlier spring snowmelt, have pushed the Southwest into its second-worst drought in more than a millennium of observations.” Source: Andrew Freedman and Darryl Fears, [Washington Post](#).

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

- *Southwestern Parks* – The NPS is asking the public not to get close to wildlife, especially wild rabbits. Rabbit hemorrhagic disease (RHDV2) has recently been detected in wild cottontail rabbits and jackrabbits in the southwest including in Bernalillo County. A highly contagious and lethal viral disease among both wild and domestic rabbits, RHDV2 doesn’t infect humans, but other causes of sickness in rabbits can. Multiple sick or dead rabbits can indicate tularemia or plague which can cause serious illness in people. Individuals with rabbits should be extremely cautious to avoid the accidental exposure of rabbits to this disease. The National Park Service warns owners that domestic rabbits should not be housed outdoors in areas where they may contact wild rabbits. Source: [KRQE News](#).
- *Death Valley NP* – More than a century after railroads, ranchers and hunters vanquished their ancestors, pronghorn antelope are returning to Death Valley. Indications are that the American pronghorn, North America’s land speed champion, may be extending its migratory range into the Mojave Desert once again from cooler areas nearly 100 miles to the north and east. It’s not yet known why they’ve returned, but it may be that the unusual spring flower blooms in the desert have drawn them to the area, feasting on desert dandelions, desert pincushions, primrose and desert golds. Concerns are being raised about what will happen to them when sources of food and water disappear during desert summers. Source: Louis Sahagun, [Elko Daily Free Press](#).

External Issues – Management issues related to usage or development in culturally or naturally sensitive areas abutting or passing through parks.

- *Grand Canyon NP* – A federal judge has ruled against environmental groups and the Havasupai Tribe in their bid to keep a uranium mine south of the Grand Canyon from operating. The Canyon Mine, located near the park’s South Rim entrance, has been on standby for nearly 20 years. The company that owns it, Energy Fuels Resources, is waiting for uranium prices to rebound before opening it. Still, environmental groups and the Havasupai Tribe sought to prevent that from happening. They sued the U.S. Forest Service, arguing the agency failed to consider the environmental and cultural costs of extracting uranium ore when it reviewed the company’s mining claims. District Judge David Campbell in Arizona said those costs would

have been minimal, considering the Forest Service projected Canyon Mine's profits at a conservative \$29 million. "A drop in profits is not enough to defeat valid existing rights if the mine remains profitable," Campbell wrote in a ruling last week. Source: Felicia Fonseca, [Albuquerque Journal](#).

The Coalition

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.

- *Great American Outdoors Act* – The Coalition [issued a statement](#) in support of the news that the Great American Outdoors Act will be a top priority for the Senate when they return in June. "Passage of the GAO Act, which includes full and permanent funding for LWCF and provisions to address the backlog of deferred maintenance in our national parks, is long overdue - and we welcome the news."
- *Protecting The Parks* – Coalition Chair Phil Francis was a recent guest on [the Great Battlefield Podcast](#) to talk about his 40 year career working for our national parks and how the Coalition is working to preserve our parks and the NPS at a time when they are under attack.
- *Speaking Out On New Alaska Hunting Regs* – Coalition Executive Council member Mike Murray wrote [an op-ed column](#) that ran in *The Hill*, saying that to authorize recreational hunters to "harvest" bear sows and their cubs, or she-wolves and their pups, at their den sites on national preserve lands in Alaska is just plain wrong:

Source: Emily Thompson, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator.

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.

- *Jefferson NEM (now Gateway Arch NP)* – On May 13th, the Mississippi River reached a level eight feet above flood stage in front of the Arch and covered a third of the Grand Staircase and much of the east side of the park. Significant resource damage is expected in this area. Rangers from other Midwest parks have been detailed to the area to assist with visitor safety due to the increase in visitation and hazards associated with the flooding. The Corps of Engineers predicted that the river would crest yesterday at ten feet above flood stage and hold at this level for a few days before beginning to drop. On May 30th, three copperhead snakes were found on the grounds in a high public use area of the park. They apparently washed down river and came ashore at the Arch. The snakes were removed. Submitted by Chief Ranger Deryl Stone.
- *Saint Croix NSR* – Around 4 a.m. on May 4th, a man entered the private home of two married permanent park employees located outside of park boundaries, entered their bedroom while they were asleep, woke the wife, displayed a gun, and threatened to kill both of them if she woke her husband. An altercation occurred when the husband awoke and found the man naked on their bed, but the assailant was able to escape. Although property was stolen from the house, neither the wife nor husband, a commissioned ranger, was hurt. A marked NPS patrol truck was parked in front of the house at the time of the incident. An investigation is being conducted by the county sheriff's department with assistance from the NPS and FBI. The park has offered a reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the assailant. It's not known if the incident was random or was directed against either federal employees in general or these employees in particular. Submitted by Chief of Interpretation Guy Whitmer.

- *Zion NP* – Over the Memorial Day weekend, rangers were involved in three separate, complex technical rescues. On May 28th, a 20-year-old male fell 80 feet while scrambling on slick rock on the east side of the park and landed in a narrow crack system about 300 feet above the ground. A park medic rappelled to his location and provided advanced life support while the rescue team set up a technical haul system. Following a difficult, eight-hour extrication, the patient was flown to a local hospital, where he was diagnosed with over 50 fractures of his mandible, crushed temporal-mandibular joints, severe fractures of his right wrist and foot, and numerous other injuries. He will likely undergo at least five surgical procedures, and has been flown back to his home state of New Mexico. While rangers were clearing from this rescue, the park was notified of two injured juveniles in the remote Left Fork slot canyon on the park's west side. They were raised about 400 feet to the drainage rim the following morning, then helicoptered to an ambulance. Injuries were confined to a fractured fibula on one victim, and bilateral ankle sprains on the other. The two were part of a group of 21 who had ignored posted closures of this drainage due to high runoff from heavy snow melt and spring rains. On May 29th, four individuals were raised 100 feet out of the Pine Creek slot canyon after becoming stuck due to a lack of appropriate climbing gear and skills. This was the third technical rescue from Pine Creek in the last two months. Reported by District Ranger Dave Buccello.

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, Emily Thompson, and Duncan Morrow
- Issue Contributors: Mark Forbes, Mike Panz, Bob Martin, Cathy Halainen, Dick 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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