



The Coalition Weekly Report

Wednesday, June 10, 2020

Volume 4

Number 20

Editor's Note

A couple of points need to be made regarding this newsletter's editorial style.

The first has to do with the nature of the entries that appear in the report. Each of them extracts the highlights from a news article or press release to provide readers with a short take on the contents, but it's necessary to click on the URL at the end to get the full story, at least as reported (the URL is the hot link that appears in the name of the source publication). Both the publication and the name of the article's author appear in order to provide proper credit. If you want more information than appears in the abstract, please click on the relevant URL.

A second point concerns endorsement. The entries are meant to direct readers to articles relevant to the National Park Service; they do not constitute or imply either approval or disapproval by the Coalition or the editorial staff for CWR. There remains, however, the issue of accuracy. A case in point is last week's reference to an article on the 50th anniversary of the Yosemite riots that appeared in *Forest History Today*. Several members pointed out errors in the story that should be corrected. Effective with the next issue, we'll therefore be accepting letters from members pointing out errors or questionable observations appearing in any referenced article.

The Editor

Incidents

National Park System NPS Pandemic Response

This section will no longer appear in the newsletter. Look to "National Parks" below for news stories about park pandemic issues and to "Federal Government" for stories pertaining to the administration's policies and actions.

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.

Grand Teton NP Injured Hiker Rescued From Backcountry

Rangers and Teton County SAR personnel rescued an injured 20-year-old man from a location near Amphitheater Lake on the evening of May 29th.

Four people were hiking to the lake when they got off route. As they traveled along the ridgeline north of Surprise Lake, Alex Curry of Scottsdale, Arizona, slipped on snow and fell over 400 feet. He fell into Glacier Gulch and landed near the shore of Delta Lake, sustaining significant injuries. The other three members of the hiking party down climbed to Curry and called 911.

The Teton County SAR team members flew to Lupine Meadows to meet park rangers and coordinate the rescue. They found that the hikers were at Delta Lake, not Amphitheater Lake. Since there was no landing zone around Delta Lake, a decision was made to short-haul the injured hiker from the backcountry.

A park ranger and a county SAR team member were lowered to the location and provided medical assistance to Curry. He was then short-hauled to Lupine Meadows and transported by a park ambulance to St. John's Health Center.

Source: [National Park Service](#).

Yellowstone NP/Dinosaur NM Follow-up On Treasure Hunt

Earlier editions of this newsletter have reported on a man being arrested in Yellowstone for attempting to climb down into Yellowstone Canyon to find a treasure he believed to have been buried there and on the death of a man at Dinosaur while seeking the same cache of gold and jewels.

Forrest Fenn, an 89-year-old art and antiquities collector, buried the treasure in the Rocky Mountain region, then announced that it was out there – somewhere. Over the years, thousands have searched for the treasure, worth over \$1 million.

Earlier this month, Fenn announced that it had been found. The finder and location have not been revealed. Fenn estimates that over 350,000 people from around the world went hunting for the treasure at one time or another.

Source: Alicia Lee, [CNN](#).

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center NIFC Ups Preparedness Level To PL 2

NIFC has raised the national preparedness level from PL 1 to PL 2.

Large fire activity continues in the Southwest and Alaska, where 31 large fires have burned more than 83,000 acres in five states. For a second day in a row, strong gusty winds and red flag fire weather conditions challenged firefighters on the Blue River and Dry Lakes fires burning on the San Carlos Apache Reservation.

National Park Service Fires

No large fires are currently burning in national parks.

Resource Commitment Trend

Category	May 26	June 2	June 9
Area Command Teams	0	0	0
NIMO Teams	1	1	1
Type 1 Teams	0	1	2
Type 2 Teams	0	0	1

Crews	9	16	60
Engines	55	47	149
Helicopters	5	11	27
Total FF/Overhead	403	635	2,136

Fires/Acreage

Category	2010-2019 Ave	2020 Total	Difference
United States: YTD Fires	23,392	20,216	- 3,176
United States: YTD Acres	1,329,769	558,724	- 771,045

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

June 1 – The Senate passed S. 3846, to observe the lives lost in the United States due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

June 2 – The Senate approved the nomination of Brian D. Miller, of Virginia, to be Special Inspector General for Pandemic Recovery by a vote of 51 yeas to 40 nays.

June 2 – The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs concluded a hearing to examine the nominations of Russell Vought, of Virginia, to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and Craig Edward Leen, of the District of Columbia, to be Inspector General, Office of Personnel Management, after the nominees testified and answered questions in their own behalf.

June 3 – The Committee on the Budget held a hearing to examine the nomination of Russell Vought, of Virginia, to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget, after the nominee testified and answered questions in his own behalf.

House Actions

June 2 – The Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing entitled “On the Front Line: How Governors are Battling the COVID-19 Pandemic”. Testimony was heard from Jared Polis, Governor, Colorado; Gretchen Whitmer, Governor, Michigan; and Asa Hutchinson, Governor, Arkansas.

June 3 – The Committee on the Budget held a hearing entitled “Addressing the Economic Impacts of COVID-19: Views from Two Former CBO Directors”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses. There were no witnesses from the administration at the hearing.

June 3 – The Committee on the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties held a hearing entitled “Protecting the Right to Vote During the COVID-19 Pandemic”.

Testimony was heard from Jocelyn Benson, Secretary of State, Michigan; and public witnesses. There were no witnesses from the administration at the hearing.

June 4 – The Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies held a hearing entitled “COVID-19 Response”. Testimony was heard from Robert Redfield, Director, 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.

- *Restore Our Parks Act* – On June 4th, several U.S. senators announced that a new study of their Restore Our Parks legislation reveals that it will support more than 100,000 jobs over the next five years and help address more than \$12 billion in NPS maintenance projects. The Senate is set to consider [S. 3422](#), the Great American Outdoors Act this week to address the deferred maintenance backlog across the federal land management agencies and to provide permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (the Great American Outdoors Act includes the Restore Our Parks legislation). It is projected to provide up to \$6.5 billion over five years to address delayed repairs to infrastructure and asset needs in the country’s national parks. “For years, Congress has critically underfunded our national parks, resulting in the buildup of \$12 billion in deferred maintenance costs,” said Senator Mark Warner (D-VA). “Despite receiving more than 318 million visitors annually, our national parks have been unable to maintain upkeep and repairs on visitor centers, rest stops, trails, campgrounds, and transportation infrastructure operated by the Park Service.” Source: Kaylynn Stephens, [WAVY News](#).
- *Expanding The National Park System* – A group called [RESTORE: The North Woods](#), a non-profit membership organization founded in 1992 by veteran conservationists and grassroots activists, has launched a project beyond its initial focus on saving and protecting northern forests. It’s called [the New National Parks campaign](#): “Conservationists have identified hundreds of additional areas that could meet national park qualifications. Most of them are urgently threatened by development. The New National Parks campaign — a project of RESTORE: The North Woods — is working with grassroots groups across the country to protect these special places before they are seriously damaged or ruined.” Here’s a sampling of some of their ideas: Triple the size of Yellowstone to better protect bison and wolves, expand Theodore Roosevelt and Dinosaur to protect them from nearby oil and gas fracking, enlarge Olympic and North Cascades to protect old growth forests outside the parks from logging, and protect large tracts of sagebrush steppe to ensure survival of sage grouse. There are more listed in the article. Source: George Wuerthner and Michael Kellett, [Wildlife News](#).

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.

- *Colonial NHP* – Since 2015, Virginia DOT has been working to replace six bridges on I-64, two of which cross over the Colonial Parkway. Due to the unique historic quality of the bricks making up those bridges, VDOT contractors have ordered about 60,000 custom-made bricks to replace them. The park has been involved in the process since its inception. Source: Matt Jones, [Daily Press](#).
- *Grand Canyon NP* – On May 28th, the park announced plans to increase recreational access to the Grand Canyon, including the resumption of Colorado River trips. Private, noncommercial

river trips with current permits will be authorized to launch in addition to commercial and administrative ones beginning June 14th. When river trips do return, they will be with limited passenger capacity to mitigate potential spread of COVID-19. No new permits for trips will be issued until at least the end of June. Source: Danny Shapiro, [KTAR News](#).

- *Mount Rainier* – Large sections of the park have been reopened. The road from Nisqually to Paradise in the park's southwestern corner was reopened last Friday, thereby providing public vehicle access to the Longmire National Historic District and to Paradise. Limited services will be available, including restrooms and trailheads, throughout the corridor. Access has been expanded on the park's east side near the White River and Ohanapecosh campgrounds for hiking and picnicking. Overnight use of campgrounds will begin at a later date. Visitor centers, hotel lodging and developed campgrounds will remain closed until it is safe to reopen them. Recreation on the Upper Mountain above 10,500 feet in elevation will open on June 19th. Public access is expected to expand further during the summer based on updated risk assessments and staffing availability. See the article for a much more detailed list of what's open and what remains closed. Source: [KOMO News](#).
- *Mount Rushmore NP* – Access to this year's Fourth of July fireworks, which President Trump is expected to attend, are being conducted through an online lottery system. The ticket lottery was announced last Thursday by Gov. Kristi Noem and Tourism Secretary Jim Hagen and was administered by the National Park Service. Lottery ticket sales opened at 8 a.m. Friday at recreation.gov; they closed at 10 a.m. Monday. Maximum capacity for the event is 7,500 people in ticketed areas, with seating planned for the amphitheater as well as the gravel parking lot across the highway. For those without a direct view of the amphitheater, jumbo screens and audio will be set up so they can see the program. Source: Morgan Matzen, [Casper Star-Tribune](#).
- *Yosemite NP* – The park will open up on Thursday but will limit daily entry to 50% of the June 2019 average. For now, visitors must reserve day passes in advance instead of driving up to the park for entry. The park will limit the number of visitors who can enter. Visitors can reserve a day-use entry pass at Recreation.gov; the system will offer 1,700 vehicle passes each day. Passes will be validated at the park's entrance gate and can be used for seven days of entry. Each user can make one reservation per day. The park will only accept credit cards for payment of entrance fees. The advance reservations system for day use is temporary and will end when the park resumes regular operations. Overnight camping and lodging will also resume Thursday, as will retail and food and beverage services. Visitor center services will be moved outdoors. No shuttle buses will be available. Source: Curtis Tate, [USA Today](#).
- *Zion NP* – The Nature Conservancy has just purchased a large tract adjacent to the park for \$4.3 million in order to preserve the ecosystem within the famous canyon. The picturesque 419-acre Utah property called Sheep Bridge includes a two-mile stretch of the Virgin River, which is relied upon as a water source for Washington County residents. The Virgin River is home to 40 species that Utah recognizes as "sensitive," a dozen of them federally-listed as endangered. Source: [GoodNewsNetwork.org](#).

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.

- *Less-Crowded Parks To Visit During Pandemic* – The June 4th edition of the *New York Times* has an article on parks in the system that are likely to be relatively crowd free and therefore present less danger from coronavirus. “For potential park-goers who wish to avoid [crowds], one strategy is to skip the Grand Canyon, the Great Smoky Mountains and the other top 10 parks that typically receive the majority of visitors. There are alternatives that are still awe-inspiring for your summer and fall fresh-air retreats, ones that offer many of the Top Ten’s sights, sounds, wildlife and activities. You may need to drive, either for safety or a lack of transit options, but these lesser-known crown jewels, all off the beaten path, are almost always mercifully free of the large groups and car traffic found in the more popular parks.” Eleven national parks are listed – Congaree, Voyageurs, Great Sand Dunes, Black Canyon, Big Bend, Guadalupe Mountains, Petrified Forest, Canyonlands, Great Basin, Lassen Volcanic and North Cascades. Source: Jon Waterman, [New York Times](#).

The Federal Government

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

- *President Uses Pandemic To Circumvents NEPA* – President Trump signed an executive order on June 4th, reports the *Washington Post*, that instructs agencies “to waive long-standing environmental laws to speed up federal approval for new mines, highways, pipelines and other

projects given the current 'economic emergency'...Declaring an economic emergency allows the president to invoke a section of federal law 'where emergency circumstances make it necessary to take an action with significant environmental impact without' observing normal requirements imposed by laws such as the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. These laws require agencies to solicit public input on proposed projects and analyze in detail how federal decisions could harm the environment." A court challenge seems likely. The *Post* cites a lawyer who points out "that the National Environmental Policy Act was enacted 50 years ago partly to prevent arbitrary federal decisions such as building highways through parks and communities of color, and that the current administration cannot simply set aside laws aimed at protecting vulnerable Americans or the environment." Source: Juliet Eilperin and Jeff Stein, [Washington Post](#).

- *DOI Assistant Secretary Found To Have Misused Position* – According to a report issued by the DOI IG last week, Interior Assistant Secretary Douglas Domenech wrote several emails as part of a successful effort to get a family member hired at the Environmental Protection Agency. Here are a couple of relevant excerpts from the report: "We determined that a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts would conclude that Domenech appeared to misuse his position to endorse and promote [the family member] despite Domenech's stated intent," the report said. As a result, the watchdog concluded that Domenech's actions ran afoul of ethical principle. "At the time of these events, Domenech was not new to Government service. To the contrary, Domenech has more than 10 years of Federal service. Over those years, he received initial and annual ethics trainings. Moreover, he received two ethics trainings in the first 2 months of his arrival in 2017, both of which specifically addressed the Federal prohibitions against misuse of position." Source: Darryl Fears, [Washington Post](#).
- *Temps May Have New Pathway To Permanent Status* – "The Office of Personnel Management on [May 15th] moved to implement two laws that would allow temporary employees at six land management agencies to apply for permanent posts across the federal government using merit promotion procedures," reports *Government Executive*. "Currently, employees hired on a temporary basis, typically for terms of one year, are barred from applying for non-entry level permanent posts through promotion procedures because they are reserved for career and career-conditional employees. This effectively bars these workers from any avenue to advance their careers within the federal government." Both the 2015 Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act and the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act authorized six agencies to provide a "pathway" for temporary land management workers to seek permanent career-track jobs – the NPS, USFS, BIA, FWS, BLM and Bureau of Reclamation. See the article for details on eligibility. Source: Erich Wagner, [Government Executive](#).

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.

- *FOIA Submitted For NPS Covid Numbers* – The Coalition submitted [another FOIA request](#) to the NPS asking for the cumulative number of NPS employees with confirmed cases of COVID-19 as of February 29, March 31, April 30, and May 31, 2020; and a simple list of the parks where those cases occurred as of the same dates.
- *Coalition Denounces Use Of Force In Lafayette Park* – CPANP issued [a strong statement](#) denouncing the President's use of force to clear peaceful protestors from Lafayette Park. In the statement, we address the use of USPP, writing, "NPS employees should never be ordered to carry out violent actions against peaceful protestors who are exercising their First Amendment rights protected under the United States Constitution. The use of tear gas, rubber bullets, and brute military force on a group of people trying to peacefully enact change is unacceptable."
- *Explanations Sought For Use Of Force In Lafayette Park* – The Coalition joined nearly 80 environmental organizations [in sending a letter](#) to Interior Secretary David Bernhardt and

United States Attorney General William Barr demanding answers about the recent actions of the United States Park Police during ongoing protests in Washington, DC. Like protests around the country, those in our nation's capital are calls for justice for people of color.

- *CPANP Joins In Forum On Reopening Of Parks* – Coalition Chair Phil Francis [testified in a virtual forum](#) held before the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands entitled "Not So Grand Opening: Examining Local Perspectives on the Department of the Interior's Plan to Reopen National Parks During the Coronavirus Pandemic."
- *E-Bikes In Parks* – The Coalition [submitted comments](#) on the proposed rulemaking for electric bicycles (e-bikes), which supplements our initial comments submitted in April.

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.

- *Glacier NP* – An exceptional amount of rain and heavy, wet snow fell on the park early this week, causing flooding, road washouts, and countless downed trees throughout the park. Rainfall measurements ranged as high as ten inches in 24 hours. Flooding at St. Mary's on Tuesday prompted activation of the emergency action plan for that area. About 22 campground and concession employees were evacuated. Crews worked through the night to cut two diversion trenches across the newly-paved Going-to-the-Sun Road to prevent damage to the visitor center and entrance/ranger station. The creek is being closely monitored for rising water that could flood the government maintenance and housing areas. Yesterday, flooding and unstable road conditions prompted the closure of roads into Many Glaciers and Two Medicine Valley and the evacuation of about 15 campers from the area. More than 125 concession employees were relocated due to water damage to Many Glacier Hotel's sewage system and lift station. Many Glacier Road has been substantially undercut and eroded in places, and is also being closely monitored. Rangers and maintenance employees worked through Tuesday night to clear trees from west side roads, where flooding is more localized. A half dozen park employees and campers can't leave the Bowman and Kintla Lake campgrounds until washouts are stabilized and flood waters recede. Weather conditions have moderated substantially, however. Full damage and repair estimates are pending, but preliminary estimates suggest a minimum of \$50,000 to \$75,000 will be needed to repair roads and about \$100,000 to repair or replace bridges and trails (ten bridge washouts have so far been confirmed). Submitted by Public Affairs Officer Amy Vanderbilt.
- *Yosemite NP* – On May 17th, rangers Chris Pergiel and Keith Lober contacted a man in the concession housing area regarding an alcohol violation. While attempting to identify the man, he began to display violent behavior towards the rangers, refused to comply with any of their requests, and fought efforts to take him into custody. A disorderly crowd of about 30 people followed the two rangers and their prisoner as they walked to the patrol vehicle. Several members of the group threatened to incite a riot and to take the prisoner away from the rangers, but a third ranger was able to keep the crowd away until the prisoner was placed in the vehicle. One person was arrested for interfering with the arrest. The third ranger was followed by the crowd as he walked to his car and was intermittently heckled and threatened. Off-duty units were called to the scene to assist him and disperse the crowd. About ten people were identified as having either interfered with the arrests or incited the crowd, but could not be taken into custody due to the initial lack of available resources. Two of the involved rangers returned to the concession housing area two nights later and spoke to a group of about 45 people, most of whom had been present at the incident. The majority were receptive to the follow-up contact. Since that time, rangers have reported no unusual difficulties or interference during patrols and contacts in the area. Submitted by Chief Ranger's Office.

- *Mount Rushmore NP* – Rangers were involved in a major interagency search for a 12-year-old boy during the period from May 12th to the 16th. The boy became separated from his school group on Harney Peak and was missing in the rugged wilderness area immediately adjacent to the park's boundary. Rangers covered many miles of difficult terrain while searching for him, and, on May 14th, located the boy's tracks in the snow. Seasonal ranger Brian McMahon found him about two miles south of the park's boundary on May 16th. He was alive and doing well, but had frostbitten feet and mild hypothermia. A local television news crew filmed his evacuation from the backcountry. During the five days the boy was missing, about eight inches of wet snow and two inches of total precipitation fell on the area. Because of the extremely wet and cold weather, searchers had little hope of finding him alive. Submitted by Chief Ranger Mike Pflaum.

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- Production: Steve Pittleman
- Regular Correspondents: Don Hellmann, Dennis Burnett, Rick Smith, Emily Thompson, and Duncan Morrow
- Issue Contributors: Bill Walters, Mark Forbes, Dick Martin, Cathy Halainen, Mike Panz, 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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