



The Coalition Weekly Report

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Incidents

Zion NP

Searchers Find Woman Missing For Two Weeks

A California woman who had been missing for nearly two weeks was found safely on Sunday, October 18th, and reunited with her family.

Holly Suzanne Courtier, 38, hadn't been seen since riding a private shuttle into the park's Grotto area on October 6th. Her disappearance prompted multiple search and rescue efforts that were complicated by the fact that Courtier didn't have a cell phone and hadn't left a trip itinerary. Park rangers located Courtier after receiving a credible tip from a park visitor.

"We are overjoyed that she was found safely today," Courtier's family said in a statement released by the park. "We would like to thank the rangers and search teams who relentlessly looked for her day and night and never gave up hope. We are also so grateful to the countless volunteers who were generous with their time, resources and support. This wouldn't have been possible without the network of people who came together."

The circumstances of Courtier's disappearance and ordeal were still largely unclear as of Monday afternoon. But in a statement, Courtier's daughter filled in some of the gaps, describing an agonizing and brutal experience.

"Early in her trip into Zion, she injured her head on a tree," Kailey Chambers said of her mother. "She was very disoriented as a result and thankfully ended up near a water source — a river bed. She thought her best chance of survival was to stay next to a water source."

Chambers said that her mother was "too weak and disoriented to actively seek out help," and that she was "without food" for the 12 days she was lost in Zion.

"She was unable to take more than a step or two without collapsing," Chambers said. "She told me she was so dehydrated she couldn't open her mouth."

The search for Courtier brought together federal, state and local resources, including the Washington County Sheriff's Office, the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and the Grand Canyon National Emergency Service Team, plus park staff and volunteers.

[Click here for USA Today story](#); click here for [NBC News story](#). Sources: Steve Kiggins, *USA Today*; Daniel Arkin, *NBC News*.

Blue Ridge Parkway

Search In Progress For Missing Man

Searchers are looking for 27-year-old Chad Seger, who was last heard from on Monday, October 12th, when he spoke briefly with a family member. He was reported missing by family on Friday.

Seger is from Asheville, and is familiar with the area. He is in good physical health and may have some hiking or camping gear with him. His car was found at the Black Balsam parking lot.

Anyone who may have seen Seger or has information about where he may be is asked to call 828-452-6600.

Officials ask people to avoid the Blue Ridge Parkway from Highway 276 to 215 while the search continues, as "heavy congestion is making search and rescue efforts difficult."

[Click on this link for the full story](#). Source: WXII News.

Hawaii Volcanoes NP

Two Hikers Rescued From Apua Point

Two experienced hikers, ages 82 and 72, were rescued by county helicopter after becoming lost overnight in the park and running out of water.

The men reportedly got off to a late start Wednesday afternoon from the Mau Loa o Mauna Ulu trailhead to Keauhou and wandered off trail during a rigorous 7.6-mile downhill hike through the Ka'u Desert. The men didn't reach the campsite and bedded down off trail overnight.

On Thursday, they found a familiar landmark but because of the rough terrain and lack of water were unable to make much distance. They called an emergency contact listed on their backcountry permit by 4 p.m., who called the park to report them lost.

Hawaii County Fire Department found the men on a rough, hardened lava field above Apua Point and the helicopter rescued them.

Both men were mildly hydrated but didn't require further medical attention.

[Click on this link for full story](#). Source: *West Hawaii Today*.

Everglades NP

Missing Kayaker Rescued From Park

What was supposed to be a three-day kayak trip through the Everglades turned into a battle for survival, as a kayaker went missing for two days in Florida's 1.5-million-acre wetlands.

The unnamed kayaker arrived at the park and took off from Hell's Bay last Thursday morning. His plan was to return on Saturday, but that didn't happen.

On Sunday, rangers started searching for the kayaker but couldn't find him. They called in the Coast Guard from Key West on Monday morning.

The man was spotted in Whitewater Bay from a USCG airplane later on Monday. The plane's crew dropped him food, water and a radio. The kayaker told them he had been lost for two days. Rangers rescued him.

[Click on this link for the full story](#). Source: Devoun Cetoute, *Miami Herald*.

North Cascades NP

Search In Progress For Missing Man

Search and rescue crews are looking for a California man who was last seen on October 8th near Colonial Creek Campground in the North Cascades.

According to the park, 35-year-old Alexander Pisch's white Toyota Corolla was found two days later parked along Highway 20 (North Cascades Highway) along with an easel he had set up for painting.

At the time of the report, the park had 20 SAR personnel in the field. They're searching the campground and the Diablo Lake area.

[Click on this link for the full story](#). Source: KCPQ News.

National Park System

Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents

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

- *US Park Police* – “Two U.S. Park Police officers were charged [October 15th] by a Fairfax County special grand jury with manslaughter in the November 2017 shooting of unarmed motorist Bijan Ghaisar,” reports the *Washington Post*, “marking the latest dramatic twist in a saga that has featured protests, congressional inquiries, an FBI investigation, civil suits and little official explanation for the man’s violent death...Though the indictment was handed up in Fairfax County Circuit Court, the case could play out in federal court in Alexandria. Federal officers are largely immune from being charged by state authorities, and ...the officers’ lawyers will [likely] seek to remove the case to federal court and argue that the Supremacy Clause bars state action.” [Click here for the full article](#). Source: Tom Jackman, *Washington Post*.

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center

National Preparedness Level Drops To PL 3

NIFC is now at Preparedness Level 3, two steps down from PL 5, its highest level.

Wildland firefighters continue to work on 62 uncontained large fires that have burned nearly four million acres.

Park And Park-Related Fires

- *Rocky Mountain NP* – The Cameron Peak Fire has now burned just over 205,000 acres, making it the largest fire in the state’s history. The fire moved into the park on Saturday, September 6th, and has encompassed approximately 7,050 acres in the Cascade Creek, Hague Creek and Mummy Pass Creek drainages in steep, thick beetle-killed forests with significant standing dead trees as well as dead and down fuels. Additional closures implemented on October 15th included the Lawn Lake Trail and surrounding area. The Cow Creek Trail, the Black Canyon Trail, the Gem Lake Trail and the Lumpy Ridge area were closed on Sunday, October 11th, as well as associated cross country zones. Area closures began on August 18th in the northwest section of the park and continued in the northeast area of the park on September 7th. Currently the northern part of Rocky Mountain National Park is closed to all recreational access. Old Fall River Road remains closed. Trail Ridge Road and other areas of the park remain open. Closures in Rocky Mountain National Park, including a map, [can be found at this link](#).
- *Yosemite NP* – NIFC reports three significant fires in the park – the Blue Jay Fire (6,640 acres, up from 5,335 acres two weeks ago – 50% contained), the Wolf Fire (1,776 acres, up from 1,092 acres two weeks ago – 60% contained), and the Rattlesnake Fire (6,830 acres – 40% contained).

- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon NPs* – The Moraine Fire has burned 760 acres, up from 694 acres two weeks ago. It's now 70% contained.

Resource Commitment Trend

Category	September 29	October 6	October 20
Area Command Teams	3	1	3
NIMO Teams	4	2	2
Type 1 Teams	16	15	9
Type 2 Teams	13	14	9
Crews	515	405	225
Engines	1,972	1,819	634
Helicopters	236	217	125
Total FF/Overhead	27,172	22,787	11,848

Fires/Acreage

Category	2010-2019 Ave	2020 Total	Difference
United States: YTD Fires	50,586	46,410	– 4,176
United States: YTD Acres	6,344,612	8,408,603	+ 2,063,991

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

October 1 – The president signed into law [S. 2193](#), to require the Administrator of General Services to issue guidance to clarify that Federal agencies may pay by charge card for the charging of Federal electric motor vehicles. (Public Law 116–160).

Senate Actions

October 12 –The Committee on the Judiciary held a hearing to examine the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett, of Indiana, to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. The nominee, who was introduced by Senators Young and Braun, and Patricia O'Hara, Notre Dame Law School, Notre Dame, Indiana, testified in her own behalf.

October 13 – The Committee on the Judiciary continued hearings to examine the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett, of Indiana, to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, and the nominee testified and answered questions in her own behalf.

October 14 – The Committee on the Judiciary continued in open and closed hearings to examine the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett, of Indiana, to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, and the nominee testified and answered questions in her own behalf.

October 15 – The Committee on the Judiciary concluded hearings to examine the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett, of Indiana, to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, after

receiving testimony from Thomas B. Griffith, Judge (Ret.), United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, and public witnesses.

House Actions

October 6 – The Committee on House Administration Subcommittee on Elections held a hearing entitled “Voting Rights and Election Administration: Combatting Misinformation in the 2020 Election”. Testimony was heard from Jena Griswold, Secretary of State, Colorado; Benjamin Hovland, Commissioner, U.S. Election Assistance Commission; and public witnesses.

October 6 – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held a hearing entitled “Interior’s Royalty Cuts: Thoughtful Policy or Industry Giveaway?”. Testimony was heard from Frank Rusco, Director, Natural Resources and Environment, Government Accountability Office; and public witnesses.

October 15 – The Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife held a hearing entitled “Environmental Justice for Coastal Communities: Examining Inequities in Federal Grantmaking”. Testimony was heard from Ernesto L. Diaz Velazquez, Director, Puerto Rico Coastal Zone Management Program, Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, San Juan, Puerto Rico; and public witnesses.

October 15 – The Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence held a hearing entitled “Misinformation, Conspiracy Theories, and ‘Infodemics’: Stopping the Spread Online”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

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.

- *NPF Increases Investment In Service Corps* – In honor of National Public Lands Day on Saturday, September 26th, the National Park Foundation announced a more than \$3.7 million investment in service corps programs across the country during fiscal year 2020, up from approximately \$3.5 million in fiscal year 2019. Service corps are locally-based organizations that engage young adults and veterans in projects that address recreation, conservation, disaster response, and community needs. Projects that support national parks range from invasive species removal to historical preservation to trail restoration. Service corps also provide on-the-job training for members, enabling them to develop leadership skills, build teamwork, and learn about public lands career paths. [Click on this link for the full story, including details on the service corps program.](#) Source: National Park Foundation.
- *Waste Reduction Project Underway In Three National Parks* – Subaru of America, Inc., NPCA, NPF have created an innovative partnership to reduce the amount of waste that the Denali, Grand Teton and Yosemite national parks send to landfills. With an average of 330 million visitors each year, the NPS manages nearly 70 million pounds of waste nationally. Since the initiative launched, more than 16 million pounds of waste have been kept out of landfills. In addition, last year, the pilot parks cut their landfill waste by nearly half. “This project proves what’s possible when national, local, and community partners join forces to innovate,” said Will Shafroth, president and CEO of the National Park Foundation. “Together, we’re gaining valuable knowledge that can benefit the more than 400 national parks across the country, aligning with the National Park Service’s sustainability goals.” [Click here for full story.](#) Source: Subaru.

Around The Parks

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

- *Cape Hatteras NS* – A six-masted ship lost more than a century ago off the Outer Banks has reappeared on Ocracoke Island. The remains of the schooner *George W. Wells* were exposed by Hurricane Teddy, which was sunk by a hurricane in 1913, “It has been unearthed several times over the history out here on the Outer Banks,” reports the park. “It is likely this wreck will be covered again with sand shortly, only to reappear in a few years.” The *George W. Wells* is one of at least three Outer Banks shipwrecks uncovered when Hurricane Teddy hit the coast with waves that were nearly 18 feet tall in late September. The *Metropolis*, wrecked in January 1878, reappeared on a beach in Corolla, and a wreck believed to be the *G.A. Kohler*, sunk in 1933, resurfaced between mile markers 25 and 27. The 345-foot-long *George W. Wells* was the first six-masted schooner and it met its demise just 13 years after its maiden voyage. Twenty-four people, including two children, were rescued when it ran aground on September 3, 1913. [Click here for link to full story](#). Source: Mark Price, *Raleigh News and Observer*.
- *C&O Canal NHP* – Last month, Lindsey Weaver, 34, became the first woman to run the entire length of the canal. She ran a total of 189.4 miles in two days, five hours, and 39 minutes. Over the course of the two days, Weaver slept six times for 15 to 25 minutes each. The first few times she said she wasn't really sleeping, but the last two, she was knocked out. She changed her shoes three times and socks six times. It didn't prevent her feet from becoming destroyed though, Weaver said, and her recovery period after the run was a lot longer than usual. [Click here for a link to the full story](#). Source: Katryna Perera, *Frederick News-Post*.
- *Carlsbad Caverns NP/Guadalupe Mountains NP* – A former oil and gas well pad on BLM land near the park has been converted into a campground for visitors to Carlsbad Caverns and Guadalupe Mountains. Owned by EOG Resources, the land was previously permitted as a well site for oil and gas extraction but was plugged about eight years ago. Instead of the traditional process of plugging the well, reclaiming the land and returning it to its original state, EOG partnered with BLM's Carlsbad Field Office and the City of Carlsbad to provide a place for visitors to the area to camp while exploring the unique landscape of the area. The site is off National Parks Highway at about mile marker 10 at Washington Ranch Road, centrally located between the two national parks. [Click here for link to full story](#). Source: Adrian Hedden, *Carlsbad Current-Argus*.
- *Cuyahoga Valley NP* – Corps of Engineers is about to spend \$15 million to restore the Cuyahoga River by adding more twists and turns to its sections that traverse the park. The river – whose name derives from a Native American word that means “crooked” – will have between 3/4 of a mile and 1 1/2 miles of curves added to its length under a new COE project funded by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Adding the extra curves will help it better absorb extra water that's been funneled into the river in the form of runoff from impervious surfaces from nearby developments, as well as added rainfall in the region due to climate change. The Cuyahoga River basin gets 7 inches more rain each year than it did in the 1960s, with an average increase of .12 inches each year. The upcoming work at the Boston Mills ski area will also include planting native trees such as sycamores, silver maples, cottonwoods, box elders and pin oaks, willows and dogwoods to absorb moisture and reduce the amount of silt that comes into the river. That will help reduce the need to dredge the river, and improve its ecosystem for insects, fish, birds and other wildlife. [Click here for link to full story](#). Source: Sabrina Eaton, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*.
- *Fort Scott NHS* – Contractors have begun removing and replacing the cedar shake shingles, eave troughs, and downspouts on seven restored and reconstructed buildings in the park. To allow the work to proceed as quickly and safely as possible, no more than one building will be temporarily closed at one time and the entire project will last approximately eight months. Work is scheduled for the guard house, all three officers' duplexes, both infantry barracks, and the dragoon barracks. [Click here for link to full story](#). Source: *Fort Scott Biz*.

- *Grand Teton NP/Yellowstone NP* – Grand Teton recorded an all-time high for recreational visits last month. The estimated 603,789 visits logged in September 2020 marks a 17% increase from last September's 517,265. The park cited an increase in hiking of 54%, an increase in camping at concession-operated campgrounds of 24%, and an increase in backcountry camping of 79% compared to September 2019. Grand Teton's counterpart, Yellowstone National Park, reported last week that its own record for September visits was set this year at 837,000, a 16% increase from the previous high logged in 2018. [Click here for a link to the full story](#). Source: Danielle Johnson, *Jackson Hole News and Guide*.
- *Katmai NP* – Bear 747 has been voted the winner of this year's [Fat Bear Week](#) competition, a celebration of the park's bulging bears as they fatten up before hibernation. The champion bear was first identified by park officials in 2004, but had never made it to the finals of Fat Bear Week. This year, 747 outdid himself this year -- he could've been ready to hibernate as early as July with the way his stomach hung, but he continued to feast, narrowly beating out his beefy runner-up, Chunk. [Click here for a link to the full story – and a photo of 747](#). Source: Scottie Andrew, CNN.
- *National Mall* – On October 7th, government officials and executives of the Trust for the National Mall broke ground on a \$15 million high-tech stables complex and education center for US Park Police horses. The complex will replace the current wood and shingle stables, surrounded by a stockade fence, that have been an eyesore on the Mall since they were erected for the nation's bicentennial 44 years ago. The new facility will be built at the location of the existing stables between the Korean War Memorial and the D.C. War Memorial on the south side of the Mall. The old stables will be torn down and replaced with a modern facility that will have areas for public interaction with the animals, a heated wash and equipment room, a medical paddock, and an office building for the officers. It will also have public restrooms — always welcome on the Mall — and two public viewing paddocks. [Click here for link to full story](#). Source: Michael Ruane, *Washington Post*.
- *White Sands NP* – The world's longest fossilized human trackway has been discovered in the park. Through the muddy shore of what was once Lake Otero, a female (or adolescent male) and child walked along, not knowing that evidence of their journey, through their footprints, would linger for more than 10,000 years. A new paper published in *Quaternary Science Reviews* documents what has been found to be the world's longest fossilized human trackway. These ancient footprints show what researchers believe to be a female or a young male walking for almost a mile, with a toddler's footprints periodically showing up alongside. The evidence reveals the person alternated from carrying the child, shifting the young one from side to side, by how the footprints broadened and slipped in the mud with the additional weight. Designated a mega track site in 2014, White Sands contains the largest collection of ice age (Pleistocene epoch) fossilized footprints in the world, which have been left behind by more than just humans. Mammoth, giant ground sloth, dire wolf, and American lion tracks have been found at White Sands. [Click here for link to full story](#). Source: National Park Service.
- *Yellowstone NP* – The park is seeking public comment on a proposal to improve telecommunication services in its developed areas. The proposal would also give the park the opportunity to remove antiquated telecommunication systems currently on mountain tops and from the backcountry as underground fiber within the road corridor becomes operational. The main points of the proposal from Diamond Communications, LLC. Include the installation of fiber-optic cable along 187 miles of park roads and the removal of five microwave radio reflectors that were installed in the park's backcountry around 1980. The proposal would not expand authorized cellular phone coverage areas in the park but would substantially improve coverage quality in existing developed areas. No new cellular towers would be installed under this proposal. Comments can be made until October 21st [at the park's PEPC website](#). Source: National Park Service.

Briefly Noted

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

- *National Historic Trails* – Last week, *USA Today* ran an article on the national historic trails managed (mostly) by the NPS – or, more correctly, a review of a book by Karen Berger entitled *America's National Historic Trails*. It includes capsule descriptions of ten of those trails, from Iditarod NHT in Alaska to Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT in the Mid-Atlantic region. [Click on this link for the full story](#). Source: Larry Bleiberg, *USA Today*.
- *New Book By CPANP Member* – Former ranger and superintendent and current member of the Coalition's executive council Sheridan Steele has written a book entitled *From Bear Dens to the Oval Office* about his 38-year career with the agency. A review of the book, including several anecdotes, and be found [at this link](#). The book can be found on Amazon [at this link](#). Source: Kurt Repanshek, *National Parks Traveler*.

The Federal Government

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

- *Federal Retiree COLA For 2021* – “The Social Security Administration announced [last week] that in 2021, Social Security recipients and all retired federal employees will receive a 1.3% cost of living adjustment, sparking calls for a change to how the annual increase is calculated,” reports *Government Executive*. “The annual cost of living adjustment for Social Security, which also serves as the basis for increases in federal retiree annuities, is calculated using the annual change in the consumer price index for workers—CPI-W—for the third quarter of the calendar year. For 2021, that change clocked in at 1.3%, which marks a decrease from 1.6% in 2020, 2.8% in 2019, and 2% in 2018.” Several paragraphs follow explaining how the COLA is determined, then this quote from Ken Thomas, national president of [NARFE](#): “The 2021 COLA of 1.3%, the lowest in four years, is an affront to the millions of federal retirees who devoted their working lives to serving the public. This insufficient COLA fails to keep up with inflation experienced by seniors, further eroding their purchasing power. The cost of health care continues to rise faster than other goods. Seniors spend more on health care than any other segment of the population—just as the nation struggles to contain a virus that poses particular danger to older Americans. And federal retirees will almost certainly be further burdened by significantly higher Federal Employees Health Benefits Program premiums, which have yet to be announced for 2021.” [Click on this link for the full story](#). Source: Erich Wagner, *Government Executive*.
- *Health Care Premiums To Rise 4.9%* - *Government Executive* has also posted a story on rising health care premiums: “Federal employees and retirees will spend an average of 4.9% more on their health insurance premiums in 2021, a sizeable increase that nonetheless is an improvement from last year's price hike. The government's share of Federal Employees Health Benefits Program premiums will increase by an average of 3% next year and agencies will cover around 70% of each enrollee's total premium costs, the Office of Personnel Management announced Wednesday. The increase in employee contributions is an improvement over last year, when the average increase was 5.6%, but remains sharply higher than the 1.5% increase in 2019.” [Click on this link for the full story](#). Source: Erich Wagner, *Government Executive*.

The Environment

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

National and Worldwide Issues

- *California's New Gigafire* – “Wildfires have gotten so extreme in recent years that experts have had to coin new terms to describe their increasingly massive scale,” reports CNN. “Enter the

‘gigafire’ -- a term for a blaze that burns at least a million acres of land and a level above the ‘megafire,’ which burns more than 100,000 acres.” The August Complex, the largest fire in California’s history, became its first gigafire in early October. California wildfires have increased in size eightfold since the 1970s, and the annual area burned by fires has increased by nearly 500%. [Click here for link to full story](#). Source: Harmeet Kaur, CNN.

- *Climate Change Causing Spike In Natural Disasters* – According to [a new report from the United Nations](#), there have been 7,348 natural disasters over the last 20 years – a dramatic increase over the number recorded during the previous 20 years. Of the natural disasters itemized in the current total, 6,681 were climate-related, as opposed to 3,656 climate-related disasters in the years 1980 through 1999. The toll of these disasters has been staggering: “[Disasters] claimed approximately 1.23 million lives, an average of 60,000 per annum, and affected a total of over 4 billion people (many on more than one occasion). Additionally, disasters led to approximately US\$ 2.97 trillion in economic losses worldwide.” According to the UN report’s authors, unless leaders in business and government take action, the world will become an “uninhabitable hell for millions of people.” [Click here for a link to the story](#). Source: *Our Daily Planet*.
- *New England Forests Ailing* – “As climate change accelerates, the trees in the Eastern forests of the United States are increasingly vulnerable,” reports the *New York Times*. “For many arborists, the challenges facing trees are reshaping and expanding the nature of their work. Many said they are spending more time on tree removal than ever before — taking down dead or unhealthy trees, or trees damaged or felled by storms... Many species — including ash, oak, maple, hemlock, elm, and white pine — have their own particular pest or disease threatening them. And there are more pests and diseases on the horizon, including insects like the spotted lanternfly and infections that weakened trees cannot fight off. Many trees are also stressed by bouts of drought or intense rain, by rising temperatures and changing season length, by extreme weather — by all the various manifestations of climate change — as well as by air pollution and by invasive plants choking or displacing them. The list of threats is long, synergistic, and growing rapidly, which means that trees do not have sufficient time to recover and adapt.” The authors talk to a number of arborists who are working to mitigate these problems and propagate resilient species. [Click here for a link to the story](#). Source: Marguerite Holloway and George Etheredge, *New York Times*.

National Park System Issues

Climate Change Impacts

- *Sequoia & Kings Canyon NPs* – Giant Sequoias are known for their resistance to insects and disease and their fire-adapted life cycle. Prior to the recent severe drought, research about giant sequoia mortality suggested that large sequoias typically died by falling or having >90-95% of their crowns scorched by fire. Standing death unrelated to crown scorch was rarely observed by scientists and managers who had spent decades working in the Sierra Nevada. During California’s 2012–2016 hotter drought, though, local USGS scientists and park managers observed widespread foliage dieback, most pronounced during 2014. They also documented 30 sequoias that died standing in Sequoia & Kings Canyon NP in the years during and following the drought, associated with native bark beetle activity and fire-related damage around the bases of trees. Beetle kill in giant sequoias is a newly reported phenomenon, associated with hotter drought. Beetle-killed trees usually had recent severe basal fire scarring. Most of these trees also grew in moist locations. Managers and scientists are gathering information to better understand responses of giant sequoia to drought and to characterize spatial patterns of vulnerability to hotter drought. The Sierra Nevada Network I&M Program is working with park staff and USGS scientists to help quantify sequoia mortality at a larger spatial scale. [Click here for link to story](#). Source: *Sierra Sun Times*.

Environmental Contamination

- *Virgin Island NP* – A recent 12-page court filing could succeed where the National Park Service so far has failed in trying to determine the extent of environmental contamination at the Caneel Bay Resort on the park's shores and have it cleaned up. In late September, a Denver attorney who has a home on St. John sent a notice of intent to sue over environmental contamination to DOI, the NPS, EPA, the governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands, and CBI Acquisitions, the firm that has operated the resort rent-free since 2004. If the parties don't answer the filing within 90 days, the attorney can follow with a lawsuit under the federal Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, also known as CERCLA, as well as the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, in a bid to force them to investigate, and if needed mitigate, environmental contamination ranging from semi-volatile organic compounds, arsenic, mercury, and hydrocarbons tied to fuel, to possibly asbestos and even DDT. [Click here for link to full story](#). Source: Kurt Repanshek, *National Parks Traveler*.
- *Gulf Islands NS* – The Coast Guard and Florida Department of Environmental Protection, in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, and the National Park Service, are coordinating efforts to remove weathered oil, discovered after Hurricane Sally, from a half-mile area of Johnson Beach. The impacted area is located on federally designated, critical habitat and marine protected areas. [Click here for a video of the cleanup](#). Source: Defense Visual Information Distribution Service.

Threatened and Endangered Species

- *Yellowstone NP* – On September 19th, eight young trumpeter swans were released at Alum Creek in Hayden Valley as part of an ongoing restoration project to increase territorial pairs of swans which have undergone a decades-long decline in the park. Recent releases and other restoration efforts have increased the population in the park to more than 20 birds and five territorial pairs, including via natural reproduction in some years. From a high of over 60 birds and 17 territorial pairs in the early 1960s to four birds in 2009 and 2010, the swan population has declined for a variety of reasons. Researchers are collecting population data such as nest success, number of territorial pairs and the number of cygnets produced each year. This data may help determine the reasons for the decline. [Click here for a link to the full story](#). Source: *Great Falls Tribune*.
- *Mesa Verde NP* – The Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed listing the Chapin Mesa milkvetch (*Astragalus schmollii*) as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and designating critical habitat for the species. A 60-day public comment period is open until November 16th. The only known population of the Chapin Mesa milkvetch globally is at Mesa Verde and on Ute land to the south. The main population is limited to 2,000 acres, mainly on Chapin Mesa with smaller populations on West Chapin Spur, Park Mesa, and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Park. Comments can be sent electronically to <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the search box enter docket number FWS-R6-ES-2018-0055. Comments are also being accepted via U.S. mail or hand-delivery at: Public Comments Processing, Attn: Docket No. FWS-R6-ES-2018-0055, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, MS: BPHC, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803. [Click here for a link to the article](#). Source: Jim Mimiaga, *The Journal*.

Exotic Species

- *Grand Teton NP* – The *Jackson Hole News and Guide* has a story about the difficulties that hunters in this year's sanctioned hunt are having in removing exotic mountain goats from the park. "There had been no evidence of mountain goats living in the Tetons since the last Ice Age, but once the alpine species drifted north from more non-native habitat in the Snake River Range they proved well adapted to the harsh terrain. Breeding wasn't observed in the park until around the turn of the century, and by 2013 biologists were estimating 10 to 15 goats in the park. That year the Park Service first pitched the idea of removing goats from the Tetons. Acting on those plans took nearly seven years, and in the meantime goat numbers grew quickly...Mountain goats are considered a threat because they're attracted to the same habitat as the sheep, and compete for finite resources. The Teton goats also carry two of five strains of pathogens that, together, are a recipe for devastating bouts of pneumonia in bighorn sheep.

Transmission between the two species isn't out of the question, and farther south in the Snake River Range the goats have all five strains of pathogens. Contracting them could cause the annihilation of a genetically unique, disease-free native bighorn sheep herd that has persisted for thousands of years...To date the technical nature of the terrain and the inaccessibility of goats has been the largest obstacle to killing them. Almost all the teams are seeing goats...but getting to them has been another story." [Click here for link to full story](#). Source: Mike Koshmrl, *Jackson Hole News & Guide*.

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.

- *Illegal BLM Actions* – CPANP joined over fifty other conservation organizations in [sending a letter](#) Interior Secretary David Bernhardt asking him to retract all management plans, decisions, rulemakings, and regulations that were influenced by William Perry Pendley after a judge ruled Pendley served unlawfully for 14 months as the director of the Bureau of Land Management.
- *Endangered Species Act Revisions* – The Coalition [signed on to a letter](#) urging DOI to withdraw the two recent proposed rules related to habitat designation under the Endangered Species Act.
- *Illegal Endangered Species Act Obstacles* – CPANP also reviewed and [signed on to a technical comment letter](#) regarding concerns over the proposed regulation, which would “create unnecessary and illegal obstacles to achieving the ESA’s conservation mandate.”
- *Ranger Rendezvous* – Coalition Chair Phil Francis participated in a panel discussion at ANPR's Ranger Rendezvous last week. Here is [a link to a short blurb about his participation](#).

Source: Emily Thompson, Communications and Advocacy Coordinator.

Park People

NPS Alumni

Passing of Craig Morris

Retired ranger Craig Morris, a storyteller and advocate for the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve, died in late September at his home, which was just a few minutes away from the park where he quite deliberately and happily spent his entire career. He was 58.

“He was Mr. Fort Caroline,” said Barbara Goodman, his superintendent for 18 years. “He had so much passion for the stories, the natural resources, just everything about the park. He loved it so much, and that was infectious.”

Morris joined the Park Service in 1987 when he was 25. He had grown up in nearby Mill Cove, paddling and exploring, and was deeply interested in the lore and the significance of the area. As a young man, he had even been arrested for chaining himself to bulldozers to protest the destruction of Native American burial grounds.

Most national park rangers move from one place to the other seeking better opportunities, but Morris purposely stayed at this park his entire career.

“I’ve sort of bucked the norm and stayed in one place,” he said, “but my lord, I look at it and there’s just so much to learn, even at this point. I’m not going to give up the chance for it to continue to wow me.”

[Click here for more full story](#). Source: Matt Soergel, *Florida Times-Union*.

National Park Service Recent NPS Management Changes

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

- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon NPs* – Clay Jordan, deputy superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park for the past five years and a key management staffer for ten years, will become the superintendent of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks on November 8th. Jordan has 35 years experience with national parks. Other assignments have been Gulf Islands, Fire Island and Cape Cod national seashores and Shenandoah, Olympic and Mount Rainier national parks. A native of Long Island, N.Y., he graduated from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst with a bachelor's degree in outdoor recreation and park administration. [Click here for full story](#). Source: Georgiana Vines, *The Knoxville News Sentinel*.
- *Shenandoah NP* – Pat Kenney has taken over management of the park. He arrived there in October following four years as deputy superintendent at Yellowstone. For more than 30 years, Kenney has worked for the Service in various capacities. Before his stint at the oldest national park in the country, Kenney was the superintendent of Cape Lookout National Seashore, a 56-mile stretch of North Carolina coastline in the southern Outer Banks. He has also served as a natural resources manager at Big Cypress National Reserve in the everglades of South Florida and worked as the NPS Planning Branch Chief at Denver Service Center. [Click here for full story](#). Source: Rachel Needham, *Rappahannock News*.
- *San Antonio Missions NHP* – Christine Jacobs will replace Mardi Arce as superintendent of the park, which encompasses four federally run mission sites that are open to the public – Concepción, San José, San Juan and Espada. The missions and state-run Alamo, as well as Rancho de las Cabras near Floresville, maintained by the park service, comprise the only UNESCO World Heritage Site in Texas. Jacobs is returning to the Service after serving for five years with the American Battle Monuments Commission in Paris, France. The commission is an independent agency of the U.S. government. She'll start in her new job on October 25th. [Click here for full story](#). Source: Scott Huddleston, *San Antonio Express-News*.

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* – On April 28, 1990, ranger Bill Wolverton discovered that the Seldom Seen Alcove site along a tributary of the Escalante River had been illegally excavated and that artifacts had been stolen. Investigating ranger Jim Bowman subsequently determined that a ceramic vessel and reed/juniper backpack had been taken. Archeologist Phil Geib told Bowman that he could identify the vessel from existing photos of it. Following the offering of a \$5,000 reward, a tip was received on the vessel's location. On February 1, 1994, Bowman, ranger Bob Piontek and criminal investigator James Houseman seized the vessel from the residence of the parents of Shane Coleman in Escalante. Houseman and special agent Pat Buccello talked with Coleman regarding his involvement in the theft and obtained admissions of culpability from him. On March 29th, the regional solicitor's office began a civil penalty proceeding against Coleman. An assessment of just under \$45,000 was filed against Coleman based on archeologist Tim Burchett's analysis. Coleman agreed to four stipulations in lieu of the full fine: identification and return of the reed/juniper backpack; field trips to the Seldom Seen and other sites that Coleman knew had been disturbed, under immunity; formal debriefing interviews regarding all previous ARPA violations; and a fine between \$5,000 and \$10,000. Coleman completed the stipulations in August; FLETC instructor Woody Jones videotaped the debriefing and field trip for the center's ARPA course. Due to Coleman's level of

cooperation, the fine was set at \$5,000. During the debriefing interview, Coleman stated that he had additional artifacts from public lands and that he was willing to forfeit them in exchange for a lower fine. On August 22nd, he turned over moccasins, sandals, wooden shovels and pottery. Due to the significance of the artifacts, the fine was reduced to \$3,000. Submitted by Chief Ranger Tomie Patrick Lee.

- *Grand Teton NP* – On the morning of September 29th, rangers received a report of a solo climber overdue from an ascent of the Middle Teton. Aaron Gams, 25, of Jackson, had left his home late on the 27th to climb the Glacier Route; he failed to return as planned, though, and also missed work on the night of the 28th. A hasty team began a search for him and soon located Gams' overnight gear stashed at the Meadows, an overnight camping area on the approach to Middle Teton. Search efforts were escalated and involved 13 rangers and five volunteers from Teton County SAR. A severe early season winter storm hit the area that night, hampering search efforts and grounding the park helicopter. The park mule string was utilized to transport supplies over the first five miles of the steep trail to the base camp; search personnel portered them the last half mile. On the morning of September 30th, 21 more people joined the effort, including local climbers and personnel from the park, Exum Mountain Guides, and Jackson Hole Mountain Guides. Searchers were hindered by new snow accumulations of up to a foot over verglass ice, two- to three-foot drifts, limited visibility, and sub-zero wind chill. At 1 p.m., a team of Jenny Lake climbing rangers summited Middle Teton via the southwest couloir and made contact with Gams, who was sitting on a chair-sized ledge about 100 feet below the summit on the northwest side of the peak. Gams was uninjured, but was suffering from severe hypothermia, frostbite, exhaustion, and dehydration. He was rewarmed as much as conditions would permit, then lowered down the southwest couloir by litter, arriving at a helicopter landing zone about two hours later. His arrival there coincided with a window in the weather which permitted the park contract helicopter to pick Gams up and bring him to an ambulance, which took him to a hospital in Jackson. Gams was hospitalized for three days with frostbite in both feet; the prognosis for toe retention is poor. According to Gams, he lost the route on the 28th and ledged out by mid-afternoon. Unable to continue up or retreat, he resigned himself to being rescued. Gams survived two days and two nights in a severe winter storm near 13,000 feet with minimal gear. Submitted by Chief Ranger Colin Campbell.
- *Biscayne NP* – Over Columbus Day weekend, a multi-agency task force comprised of rangers from Biscayne and other area parks and officers from Metro Dade PD, Florida Marine Patrol, the U.S. Marshals Service and the Coast Guard issued approximately 2,000 citations within the park for infractions that occurred during the regatta weekend. Among these were 30 citations for boating under the influence (BUI) violations, 11 for drug-related activities, eight for weapons possession, 23 for disorderly conduct, and 962 for violations of special regulations established by the superintendent. Other incidents included three boating accidents (one of which damaged four vessels), four stolen boats, five EMS incidents and four sinkings. The regatta is a traditional yachting race that has taken place for the past 41 years. The event, however, has little to do with yacht racing these days, and more to do with excessive alcohol and drug consumption and other illicit activities. Submitted by Chief Ranger Wayne Elliott.

A Closing Observation

"[The Service's] first responsibility is to make sure that we are properly safeguarding the treasures we now possess... We have an obligation to be a global leader in our environmental ethic and in resource management in its broadest sense. We must continue to expand our efforts to gather baseline scientific data for use in making the best possible resource management decisions....Just as the world has become a global economy, we are increasingly bound together in our environmental world. It is in our own self-interest that we show, by leadership and example, our strong commitment to environmental protection. We have the ability to influence global thinking on many important environmental issues."

Director James Ridenour, *The National Parks Compromised: Pork Barrel Politics and America's Treasures*.

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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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