



The Coalition Weekly Report

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Incidents

Cape Lookout NS Murder Victim Identified

An autopsy has determined that a severed head that washed ashore last May is that of a 21-year-old soldier from Fort Bragg.

Enrique Roman-Martinez, a paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division, was last seen on May 22nd at a campsite on South Core Banks, one of the islands that make up Cape Lookout National Seashore. His friends reported him missing the following evening and found his phone and wallet at the campsite.

Roman-Martinez's severed head washed ashore on May 29th in an area where the tides have washed up other remains in years past. He'd also suffered multiple chop injuries to the neck and cervical spine.

Because the rest of his body was not recovered, medical examiners could not determine the cause of death, but based on autopsy findings it was determined Roman-Martinez's death was due to homicide.

Special agents with US Army CID are working closely with several federal and local agencies on this investigation and increased a reward from \$15,000 to \$25,000 for any information leading to the apprehension and conviction of the person responsible for the death of Roman-Martinez.

[Click here for the full story](#). Source: Amir Vera and Artemis Moshtagian, CNN.

National Park System Follow-ups On Previously Reported Incidents

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

- *California Parks* – The resurgence of the pandemic in California has directly affected at least three national parks. In support of the California regional stay-at-home order in the San Joaquin Valley region, which went into effect this past Monday, Yosemite National Park is open for day use activities only, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.. Lodging and campgrounds are currently closed. Some services and facilities are limited, and shuttles are not operating. Consistent with the state's regional stay at home order, day use limits will be in place until local conditions change. [Click here for the full story](#). Two areas at Golden Gate NRA have also been closed – Alcatraz Island and Fort Point. [Click here for the story](#). Sources: *Sierra Sun Times*; KRON News.

- *Gulf Islands NS* – The Fort Pickens area of Gulf Islands National Seashore reopened to the public last Saturday morning after remaining closed for almost three months in the wake of Hurricane Sally. Sally caused roughly \$4.5 million in damage to the Florida portions of Gulf Islands, with the biggest blows coming from roadway repairs that are estimated to cost nearly \$2 million and repairs to the destroyed ferry pier that will cost another \$1.2 million. The Fort Pickens area closed on September 12th, several days before Sally made landfall as a Category II storm. It caused the park to need a total of 26 different repair projects in Florida alone. The Fort Pickens ferry pier, mine storeroom and bookstore still remain closed due to hurricane damage. Other closed Gulf Islands areas are the Langdon Beach parking lot, restrooms and picnic pavilion, as well as parking lot 17A. [Click here for the full story](#). Source: Madison Arnold, *Pensacola News Journal*.

National Fire Situation

National Interagency Fire Center Fires This Year Have So Far Burned 9.5 Million Acres

The national preparedness level has dropped to PL 1.

NIFC has stopped producing daily reports in favor of a weekly summary. The following was posted on December 4th: Six large fires were burning in California. Four new large fires were reported last week, and firefighters were able to reach containment goals on five large fires. To date, 52,834 wildfires have burned 9,539,554 acres, the second most acres burned in the past 10 years.

Fire News

- *Australia Is Burning Again* – Firefighters have been battling a massive bushfire on the popular tourist destination of Fraser Island for six weeks now as the country sweltered under its hottest November on record. Crews are also battling fires in dozens of other areas of mainland Queensland and New South Wales. Bushfires are common across the country, but especially arid conditions in recent years have led to worsening blazes. Experts worry the continued record heat could set up another devastating bushfire season. Last year's so-called Black Summer was Australia's worst bushfire season ever, burning nearly 30 million acres and directly killing at least 33 people and an estimated 1 billion animals. [Click here for the text of the story](#). Source: Helen Regan, CNN.
- *Correlation Between California Fires And Atmospheric Rivers Under Study* – “At the Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes,” reports the *Washington Post*, “researchers feel the urgency as they examine connections between West Coast precipitation and a devastating wildfire season, which has yet to conclude...[There] is now a greater understanding of how the presence or absence of [atmospheric rivers](#) determines so much, such as whether vegetative fuels will be primed to ignite when fire comes too close.” The article details the close correlation between the number, frequency and timing of such rivers with the ensuing fire seasons. “If we get a lot of precipitation in the winter, it can grow a lot of undergrowth, which creates more fuel for the fire, potentially,” says the center’s director. “And then in the fall, if we get good storms early enough, they can really reduce the fire risk and shorten the fire season. But if the productive storms don’t show up early enough or they are delayed, the fire season is extended — things get drier and the risks go up.” [Click here for the full story](#). Source: Mike Branom, *Washington Post*.

Resource Commitment Trend

Category	November 25	November 27	December 4
Area Command Teams	0	0	0
NIMO Teams	0	0	0
Type 1 Teams	0	0	1

Type 2 Teams	4	0	0
Crews	17	11	9
Engines	105	26	167
Helicopters	9	3	13
Total FF/Overhead	1,483	502	1,165

Fires/Acreage

Category	2010-2019 Ave	2020 Total	Difference
United States: YTD Fires	55,941	52,934	- 3,007
United States: YTD Acres	6,613,017	9,539,554	+ 2,926,537

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

December 1 – The Senate agreed to the House amendment to [S. 1982](#), to improve efforts to combat marine debris. The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law.

December 2 – The Senate passed the following:

- [H.R. 3349](#), to authorize the Daughters of the Republic of Texas to establish the Republic of Texas Legation Memorial as a commemorative work in the District of Columbia.
- [H.R. 3465](#), to authorize the Fallen Journalists Memorial Foundation to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs.

The bills now go to the president to be signed into law.

December 2—Senator-elect Mark Kelly of the State of Arizona was sworn in to fill the remainder of the term of the late Senator John McCain. Kelly defeated incumbent Sen. Martha McSally, who was appointed to fill the vacancy until the special election was held last month.

December 3—The Senate passed [H.R. 473](#), to authorize the Every Word We Utter Monument, a non-profit organization, to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia in commemoration of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which gave women the right to vote. The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law.

House Actions

December 3—Representative-elect Kwanza Hall was sworn in as Representative to Congress for the Fifth Congressional District, State of Georgia to fill the remainder of the term of the late Rep. John Lewis.

December 3—The House passed the following:

- [H.R. 1049](#), to authorize a National Heritage Area Program.
- [H.R. 306](#), to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a reconnaissance survey of the site of the Kettle Creek Battlefield in Wilkes County, Georgia, and adjacent property.
- [H.R. 3682](#), to provide for greater consultation between the Federal Government and the governing bodies and community users of land grant-mercedes (a community land grant issued under the laws or customs of Spain or Mexico that received a patent from the United States or has been recognized under State law) and acequias (a waterway in the State recognized as an acequia or a community ditch under State or Federal law, including the diversions, storage facilities, and easements of such waterway) in New Mexico and to provide for a process for recognition of the historic-traditional uses of land grant-mercedes.

National Park Service

Around The Parks

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

- *El Malpais NM* – A team of geoscientists has discovered that Ancestral Puebloans survived devastating droughts by traveling deep into caves to melt ancient ice as a water resource. Dating back as far as AD 150 to 950, the water gatherers left behind charred material in the cave indicating they started small fires to melt the ice to collect as drinking water or perhaps for religious rituals. The droughts are believed to have influenced settlement and subsistence strategies, agricultural intensification, demographic trends and migration of the complex Ancestral Puebloan societies that once inhabited the American Southwest. Researchers claim the discovery from ice deposits presents "unambiguous evidence" of five drought events that impacted Ancestral Puebloan society during those centuries. [Click here to read the story](#). Source: American Association for the Advancement of Science.
- *Great Smoky Mountains NP* – The park and Cherokee National Forest have received a \$6 million grant to create 50 to 75 miles of mountain bike trails to the top of Hall Mountain, with a shuttle to take the bikers up there. The money comes from the Appalachian Regional Commission and will pay for 50-plus miles of mountain bike trails. Some of those trails will be on Foothills Parkway, which stretches through Sevier and Blount counties. Link to the story not available. Source: *Daily Times*.
- *White House* – First Lady Melania Trump has announced that a new tennis pavilion on the south grounds is "ready for action." The project includes sprucing up an existing tennis court and children's garden, in addition to construction of the pavilion, which replaces a smaller structure. The pavilion's design was inspired by the architecture of the White House, especially the East and West Wings. A colonnade, parapet wall and fanlight windows tie the new building to the look and feel of the White House. Planning for the project began in early 2018, followed by approval in June 2019 by the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission. Construction was in partnership with the Trust for the National Mall and the National Park Service. The new building was funded by private donations. [Click here for the full story](#). Source: KOMO News.
- *Voyageurs NP* – Last week, Voyageurs National Park, Voyageurs Conservancy, and the International Dark-Sky Association announced the certification of Voyageurs National Park as an International Dark Sky Park. This certification recognizes the park for the exceptional quality of its dark night skies and for the park's commitment to preserving darkness and educating the public about this outstanding resource. [Click here for more information](#). Source: *International Falls Daily Journal*.

Opinions

Opinions, op-eds, letters and articles expressing specific opinions about issues pertaining to the national parks or national park system.

- [“Want More Science-Based Policies? Start by Protecting the Scientists,”](#) Maria Caffrey, Union of Concerned Scientists. Caffrey, a former National Park Service partner who filed a whistleblower complaint against the agency in July 2019, currently works on issues related to climate change and scientific integrity. “I am eager to put the past behind me,” she says, “but I am also acutely aware that if we do not make the effort to learn from our history then we risk repeating it. So how can we close the gaps in our laws to ensure that industry cannot profit at the expense of public health or diminish our public lands? Two words: scientific integrity. Scientific integrity refers to the professional culture, norms, and rules that underpin the production, communication, and use of scientific research. Now more than ever we need to establish scientific integrity policies and laws that prevent the suppression and distortion of scientific research, and prohibit retaliations against scientists. Without this we risk future abuse and manipulation of science and harm to the public good.”
- [“Three Years Is Too Long For Justice In Bijan Ghaisar’s Death,”](#) Editorial Board, *Washington Post*. The *Post* offers an assessment of the case in which Ghaisar was shot by two Park Police officers: “[The] officers’ conduct is a case study, ready-made for the police academy, of how not to handle what could and should have been a routine officer-involved event. How not to escalate. How not to rashly brandish service weapons. How not to allow exasperation become a pretext for the unwarranted use of lethal force. To read the motions filed by the officers’ attorneys, in federal court, is to enter into an upside-down world where phony justifications are applied retroactively regardless of the fact that they don’t square with the truth. The video of Ghaisar’s shooting is a plain refutation of the officers’ assertions that they, or the public, were somehow in danger. Three years is too long for justice in Ghaisar’s death. Too long for his family, and too long for the public. The passage of time has not blunted the sheer outrage of such an abuse of power and a failure of judgment — the very things we most fear from the people paid to serve and protect.”

Briefly Noted

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

- *New Toilets Helping Parks To Deal With Chronic Human Waste Problems – The Guardian’s* December 2nd edition had a story with a provocative headline: “Worst Work In The World’: US Park Rangers Grapple With Tide Of Human Waste.” It focuses both on this widespread problem and on a solution being tried at Rocky Mountain NP that seems to be working – a toilet being produced by a company called ToiletTech (previously reported in this newsletter). They’re working so well that they’re now being employed at Zion, Mount Rainier and elsewhere. [Click on this link to read the article](#). Source: Grant Stringer, *The Guardian*.
- *NPS Cookies Feature Downside Of Bison-Human Contacts* – “Whoever is running the social media account for the National Park Service is having fun,” reports *Cowboy State Daily*. “For Thanksgiving, they made fun of the Idaho man who tried to cook a chicken over Old Faithful (or whatever thermal feature it was). A few months ago, they advised not tripping your friend if a bear starts running after you. They say there are better solutions. (We say, don’t knock it until you try it). And now, just in time for Christmas, they are using a festive gingerbread person to remind people that selfies with wild animals is really a dumb idea. We all remember the biker from Iowa who jumped off her motorcycle in Custer State Park to pet a bison and ended up losing her pants. The National Park Service is reenacting that special moment on Facebook with not only a gender-neutral gingerbread person but three charging Gingerbread bison.” Click on this link to read the article and also see a photo of the cookies. Source: Jimmy Orr, *Cowboy State Daily*.

Park People

NPS Alumni Passages

A listing of the deaths of retired and active NPS employees over the past few months:

- *Robert Maynard*, 93, died at his home on Orcas Island on November 12th. Bob and his wife Nancy moved to Yosemite right after WWII and he spent the next 24 years rising through the ranks of the Curry Company, the park's concessioner. He was also involved in starting the Yosemite Mountaineering School and the Yosemite Institute of Environmental Education. Bob then spent a short time managing Jackson Lake Lodge in Grand Teton National Park and went on to serve as assistant director for concessions in WASO. [Click here for the full obituary](#). Source: *The Islands' Sounder*.
- *Page Painter*, who served in the National Park Service for over 30 years, retiring from Gettysburg National Military Park, died at the age of 88 on November 28th. [Click here for full obituary](#). Source: *Gettysburg Times*.
- *Roy Jacobs*, 72, passed away at home on November 6th in Mariposa after a three-year battle with cancer. Roy worked with several local building contractors before his employment with the National Park Service in Yosemite National Park, where he worked for 31 years. [Click here for the full obituary](#). Source: *Mariposa Gazette*.
- *Harley Jolley*, a World War II veteran, Pearl Harbor survivor, history professor for over 40 years at Mars Hill University, author, national park historian and interpretive ranger, and a frequently-interviewed subject matter expert on the Blue Ridge Parkway and the 1930s-era Civilian Conservation Corps program, passed away at his home on November 23rd. He was 100 years old. Harley spent 25 years as a seasonal ranger and historian with the interpretive division at Blue Ridge Parkway. [Click here for the full obituary](#). Source: *Asheville Citizen Times*.

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:

- *Rhonda Loh* has been selected as the new superintendent of Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. She will assume her duties on December 20th. Loh, a native Hawaiian, began her career in the Service as a volunteer in 1989 before landing her first permanent position as a biological technician at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. She later served as the park's botanist and then chief of natural resource management. Loh also served as acting superintendent at other national parks across Hawaii, including Pearl Harbor National Memorial, Haleakala National Park, Kaloko-Honokohau and Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau National Historical Parks, and Kalaupapa National Historical Park. [Click here for the full story](#). Source: *Hawaii Tribune Herald*.
- *Bill Justice* retired from his position as superintendent of Vicksburg National Military Park last week. Bill's first job with the National Park Service was in 1974 at C&O Canal National Historical Park when he was a junior in college. His career then took him to parks throughout the country in roles as resource manager, interpretation ranger and law enforcement officer. [Click here for the full story](#). Source: Associated Press.

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.

- *Mount Rainier NP* – High water caused by heavy rains and snow melt led to flooding and partial closure of some areas of the park on November 28th. The Paradise/Longmire area in the southwest corner of the park received over six inches of rain in a 24-hour period and over 15 inches of rain during a six-day period. Rivers crested at three feet above flood stage and damaged roads, trails, bridges and other park facilities. On November 29th, seven campers were evacuated by helicopter from the Carbon River area when the state road leading to the park was destroyed by flooding. Flooding outside the park was even more severe and closed many access roads to Mount Rainier. Two routes on the east side of the park were kept open to provide access to services for neighboring communities. Longmire was reopened on the 30th; on December 1st, the road to Paradise was reopened. Damage assessments are underway. Snow is rapidly covering the damage caused by the floods, however, thereby making damage assessment difficult. Submitted by Bill Larson
- *North Cascades NP* – The heavy rains which forced closure of parts of Mount Rainier on November 28th also caused record flooding throughout North Cascades, Ross Lake and Lake Chelan. The Marblemount ranger station received over four inches of rain in a 24-hour period; some areas of the park have received more than three feet of rain in the past 30 days. Preliminary surveys of the east side of North Cascades and the Stehekin area of Lake Chelan indicate that damage will exceed that inflicted by the Thanksgiving Day floods of 1990. Peak stream flows in the Stehekin River were measured at 21,000 cfs; in 1990, they were recorded at 13,000 cfs. Large sections of the recently repaired Stehekin Valley road were swept away, the park maintenance shop had over a foot of standing water on its floors, the Company Creek road and Harlequin Bridge areas were extensively damaged, and at least four residences on private land were damaged. On the west side of the park, the flooding aggravated damage caused by floods that struck the area in early November. Roads, trails, bridges, campgrounds and other park facilities received even greater damage. Initial estimates indicate that damage will exceed \$1.3 million. As at Mount Rainier, however, recent snows have covered damage, making full assessments difficult. Several employees' private residences outside the park were damaged by the floods. Submitted by Chief Ranger Pete Cowan.
- *Vicksburg NMP* – Relic hunters have illegally excavated 180 holes at five significant Civil War sites in the park. The ARPA violations began during the government shutdown, stopped for a few days, then resumed over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. The first site excavations were found on the afternoon of November 19th, when a patrol ranger found 24 holes in and around the Railroad Redoubt fortification. Checks of other park areas led to the discovery of another 26 holes in and around Fort Garrott and nine more near the Georgia Monument. No new excavations were discovered until November 25th, when 30 more were found along Kentucky Avenue. Surveillance was begun, but no illegal activity was detected. On the following morning, a dozen new holes were found on Railroad Redoubt, 15 more in the woods just north of the site, and nine at South Fort. All excavations were similar; some appeared to have been dug with a full-size shovel, others were apparently hacked out with a small folding shovel. In each incident, it appears that the relic hunters entered the park on foot from a nearby city street. Access to the 36 miles of park tour road typically requires less than a 50-yard walk through privet hedge or forest. Although the initial violations occurred during daylight hours, investigation indicates that the remaining excavations took place at night. Southeast Archeological Center archeologists have conducted a site survey. Their preliminary assessment is that this is one of the worst ARPA cases their office has seen in a Civil War area. A damage assessment is currently underway. The investigation continues. Reported by Greg Zeman.

A Closing Observation

"For the information of the public, an outline of the administrative policy to which the new Service will adhere may now be announced. This policy is based on three broad principles: First, that the national parks must be maintained in absolutely unimpaired form for the use of future generations as well as those of our own time; second, that they are set apart for the use, observation, health, and

pleasure of the people; and third, that the national interest must dictate all decisions affecting public or private enterprise in the parks."

[Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane](#) in a 1918 letter to Stephen Mather

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- Issue Contributors: Don Coelho, Bill Walters, Scot McElveen, Randy Turner, Bob Martin, John Townsend

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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