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THE COALITION TO PROTECT
AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS
VOICES OF EXPERIENCE

The Coalition Report
Wednesday, August 11, 2021

Coalition Actions

Coalition Chair Phil Francis joined a *National Parks Traveler* podcast in mid-July to discuss why the National Park Service still is without a Senate-confirmed director: https://protectnps.org/2021/07/25/national-parks-traveler-episode-128-waiting-for-a-national-park-service-director/

The Coalition submitted a letter to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources at the end of July in opposition to S. 15261, which would authorize the use of off-highway vehicles on certain park roads in Capitol Reef National Park in south-central Utah. We also expressed our strong opposition to S. 15272, which would amend Title 54, United States Code, to provide that State law would apply to the use of motor vehicles on roads within a National Park System unit: https://protectnps.org/2021/07/30/coalition-submits-letter-in-opposition-to-atv-use-in-utah-national-park/

The Coalition joined numerous partners in a sign-on letter sent to President Biden, urging him to nominate a National Park Service Director as soon as possible: https://protectnps.org/2021/08/05/coalition-joins-partners-in-push-to-nominate-a-nps-director/

Check out our website for a clock counting the days/hours/minutes/seconds since we've last had a Senate-confirmed NPS Director: https://protectnps.org/

National/Regional NPS Updates

A summary of news pertaining to management and oversight of the NPS, to current trends and issues affecting the national park system or on a more regional basis.

- *Masks required in many national park buildings* - Many national parks have announced that they will once again require all visitors, regardless of vaccination status, to wear masks while inside park facilities and buses, under guidance from the CDC that people wear masks indoors where there is "substantial and high transmission risk." Big Bend, Zion, Rocky Mountain, and Shenandoah are a few who are requiring masks. Sources: Many. This situation is evolving day-by-day, and *National Parks Traveler* has attempted to keep a running list here.

- *FAA Opens Comment on Air Tour Management Plans at 4 parks* - The Federal Aviation Administration and NPS have published four air tour management plans, more than 2 decades after the National Park Air Tour Management Act of 2000 was implemented. After a lawsuit by the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, in May 2020, a federal judge ordered the NPS and FAA to complete their plans within the next two years for several parks. The four that are open for comment are Mount Rainier, Death Valley, Everglades, and Olympic (also listed below in Public Comment section). Source: *National Parks Traveler*, *Federal Register*

- *USFS announces intent to suppress all fires temporarily* - Due to a lack of resources, extreme drought, and a propensity of wildfires that U.S. Forest Service Chief Randy Moore called a "national crisis," the USFS will be suppressing all fires temporarily rather than allow some to burn naturally for "resource benefit." Ignited prescribed burns will be utilized on a limited, approved basis. Though this does not apply to the National Park Service, it will affect interagency fire efforts. Source: *Wildfire Today*

- *NPS plans campaign to promote lesser-known parks to reduce crowding at popular ones* - On a call organized by the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, the Interior Department's assistant secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Shannon Estenoz, mentioned that overcrowding is a major problem at 15 of the most popular parks, while many other NPS units are overlooked. She did not give details on how they would be promoted. Source: *National Parks Traveler*

- *Drought affects economic success of parks - National Parks Traveler* is doing a multi-part series on the effects of drought on parks. The most recent edition outlines economic impacts. It outlines visitor spending and job losses related to heat and effects to waterways. Source: *National Parks Traveler*

- *President Biden's Environmental Track Record - The Washington Post* is tracking President Biden's policies, particularly overturning the poor environmental track record of the previous administration. You can see them here. Meanwhile, the New York Times reports that President Biden's climate change aspirations are being stymied by a brain drain related to the previous administration that has been difficult to ameliorate. Source: Bill Walters, *The Washington Post, New York Times*

- *Great American Outdoors Act projects have begun* - The Pew Charitable Trusts have given an overview of the 2020 GAOA and some of the projects that have received its inaugural support. Source: Pew Charitable Trusts

- *Protecting the quietest soundscapes in the U.S.* - Gordan Hempton, an audio ecologist and co-founder of Quiet Parks International, wrote an article in *Mountain Journal* about the beauty and threats to truly quiet spaces, particularly in national parks. Source: *Mountain Journal*

A lot of NPS grants were awarded in the last two weeks!

- *NPS awards $15 million to preserve civil rights history* - The NPS African American Civil Rights Grant Program has awarded $15,035,00 to 53 projects in 20 states to preserve sites and history related to the African American struggle for equal rights. Source: National Park Service

- *NPS awards $1.9 million to repatriate remains and cultural items under NAGPRA* - The NPS announced grants to nine tribes, one Native Hawai'ian organization, and 22 museums to assist in the repatriation of ancestral remains and cultural items under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Source: National Park Service

- *NPS awards $1.2 million to preserve battlefields* - The NPS announced grants to 11 entitites through the American Battlefield Protection Program Source: *Red Lake Nation News*, National Park Service

- *NPS awards $9.7 million for preservation at Historically Black Colleges and Universities* - The NPS announced grants for 20 preservation projects for historic structures on campuses of HBCUs in 10 states. Source: National Park Service

- *NPS awards $16 million to support economically disadvantaged communities* - The NPS announced grants to develop brand new or improve 15 parks and 4 trails in economically disadvantaged urban areas in 13 states through the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership. Source: National Park Service

Around the Parks

Park reports are in alphabetical order.

- *Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve* - 40 new fossilized footprints of adult and young hadrosaurs (duck-billed dinosaurs), as well as fossilized plant matter, were discovered on a recent two-week expedition by paleontologists from Hokkaido University in Japan, University of Alaska Fairbanks, and Southern Methodist University. Source: *WFAA*

- *Assateague Island National Seashore* - An online petition with over 37,000 signatures has been submitted to Maryland politicians and state park officials, and the NPS, to install more speedbumps. According to the NPS, 53 wild horses have been struck by cars, 35 of which were killed. Speed bumps have been added previously, and the NPS has said that they're not sure more will solve the issue because the majority of deaths have occurred while cars were already moving very slowly. Source: *Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette*

- *Assateague Island National Seashore* - The park has announced the completion of a Record of Decision for the General Management Plan. It was signed on July 26. Source: Assateague Island National Seashore

- *Camp Nelson National Monument* - The park has acquired the 85-acre Glass Farm from Jessamine County, after a 25-year partnership effort to preserve the camp. Management plans and an archaeological survey are forthcoming. Source: *WTVQ*

- *Cape Cod National Seashore* - The park hosted its 10th annual "Bike Safety at the Seashore" event, including free safety checks and basic maintenance support for bicycles. The 25-mile Cape Code Rail Trail attracts roughly 1 million people annually, and bike accidents are the number one visitor accident in the park, with 25-30 accidents each season. Source: *The Provincetown Independent*

- *Cane River Creole National Historical Park* - In conjunction with the Cane River National Heritage Area, the park is hosting a community open house for the Texas & Pacific Railway Deport on August 23 for the public to both tour the depot and participate in a listening session meant to gather more of the stories and memories related to the park. Source: Cane River Creole National Historical Park

- *Crater Lake National Park* - The NPS has chosen the Ausland Group, a Grants, Oregon-based construction firm, to renovate the historic Steel Visitor Center. The project will rehab the structure and systems of the building and preserve its cultural history. The contractor has stated that its Rogue Valley-based crews of carpenters and laborers will do the majority of the work. Source: *KDRV*

- *Curecanti National Recreation Area* - The park has published a timeline for anticipated boat ramp closures at Blue Mesa Reservoir as it draws water down to fill downstream Colorado Basin reservoirs. The surface level is expected to drop 34 feet. At its lowest point this fall, it is predicted the water level will stand at 96 feet below maximum storage. Source: *CBS Denver*

- *Curecanti National Recreation Area* - The park was certified by the International Dark-Sky Association as a Dark Sky Park. It is the first National Recreation Area to be certified under this program. Source: *National Parks Traveler*, International Dark-Sky Association

- *Everglades National Park* - The six-mile Tamiami Trail roadbed has been removed, six months ahead of schedule. The roadbed was the foundation of an old railroad track and had created poor water flow and harmful discharges into the wetland ecosystems of the Everglades. Source: *WPTV*

- *Fire Island National Seashore* - The NPS issued two concessions prospectuses for a 10-year concession operation of passenger service between Patchogue and Watch Hill, and South Shore of Long Island and Sailors Haven, respectively. Source: Fire Island National Seashore

- *Fort Scott National Historic Site* - A crew from the Midwest Archeological Center is conducting a geophysical survey this week to better understand how the fort looked in the 1840s. Source: Fort Scott National Historic Site

- *Glacier Bay National Park* - During the pandemic, NPS staff, in collaboration with Cornell University, were able to track whale behavior with far fewer tour boats and cruise ships in the bay, finding that whales spread out farther because they could communicate over longer distances with less man-made noises. A Juneau ballot initiative to limit days and times for tours, and sizes of ships was created by a local citizen, but did not gain enough signatures to move to a ballot measure. Many local business owners came out strongly against the initiative. Source: *BBC*

- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area* - Halls Crossing pumpout station is now closed for the season due to low lake levels. The Halls Crossing launch ramp is currently open only to non-motorized watercraft. Source: Glen Canyon National Recreation Area

- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - The New Yorker ran an long-form narrative non-fiction article this week called "The Lost Canyon Under Lake Powell," about the Glen Canyon Dam, Lake Mead, their history, the dwindling lake levels, and the future. Source: *The New Yorker*

- *Grand Teton National Park* - On August 6 at the park, nine new U.S. citizens were naturalized into the U.S. in a ceremony overseen by Chief Magistrate Judge Kelly H. Rankin. Source: *Buckrail*

- *Great Basin National Park* - The park is getting a new backcountry radio repeater unit to aid with park communications. The park was able to borrow one temporarily from Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks to test its efficacy, and then worked with its park partner, the Great Basin National Park Foundation, to secure grants from a local bank and tourism board to purchase their own. Source: *Mesquite Local News*

- *Homestead National Historical Park* - The NPS is partnering with the University of Nebraska's Center for Great Plains Studies and a team from the University of Oklahoma to expand research about Black homesteaders. The project will be conducted over several years, and has received funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the 400 Years of African American History, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and NPS. Source: *KETV*

- *Hot Springs National Park* - Superintendent Laura Miller said publicly that it has no intention of acquiring two statues of Confederate generals removed from parks in Charlottesville, Virginia. The *Associated Press* had reported earlier in the week that at least 13 organizations, 1 municipality, and 18 individuals have expressed interest in acquiring the statues, including Hot Springs. It was unclear to Miller how the park ended up on the list, stating it was the first time it had come to light. Source: *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*

- *Indiana Dunes National Park* - The park is looking for food trucks or other self-contained food service vendors to apply for a Commercial Use Authorization permit to cater special events and festivals. Source: *Inside Indiana Business*, Indiana Dunes National Park

- *Mammoth Cave National Park* - The park and a group of volunteers is excavating the sites of the Mammoth Cave Hotel that was built in 1925 and torn down in 1977 and the remains of the original hotel that burned down in 1916. The project will go 3 weeks, and will make way for a new road construction project at the park. Source: *Bowling Green Daily News*

- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - The Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria have announced plans to rebuild the damaged roundhouse at Kule Loklo replica village in the par. The roundhouse has been used by Coast Miwok descendants for traditional ceremonies since the 1970s. In 2019, the roof and rafters were removed by the NPS after they began to collapse. The tribe plans to pay for the full cost of the reconstruction, which will use both traditional elements and more modern structural abutments. Source: *Marin Independent Journal*

- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - A federal judge has denied a request from Harvard Law School's Animal Law and Policy Clinic that the park provide more food and water resources for its tule elk herd to ensure their health and survival. After hearing testimony on July 30, an order was written, stating that "the Court is not indifferent to the conditions facing the tule elk or to the importance of their survival at Tomales Point. But neither, it seems is the Park Service. What is clear is that this case raises complex and nuanced questions of wildlife management." Source: *Marin Independent Journal*

- *Saguaro National Park* - The park is making efforts at diminishing invasive buffelgrass by using helicopters to spray herbicide over about 600 acres. The grasses affect native grasses and create dangerous fire regimes. Source: *KOLD*

- *San Antonio Missions National Historical Park* - Sister Cities International named the City of San Antonio Sister Cities Program its Best Overall Program for 2021. One of its accomplishments in 2021 was an outdoor exhibit and video project between San Antonio and Suzhou, China focused on world heritage, which included collaboration with the park. Source: Green and Grey Report, City of San Antonio

- *Santa Fe National Historic Trail* - From August 3-7, the NPS has partnered with the Innovators Educational Foundation to host the American Solar Challenge from Missouri to New Mexico along the Santa Fe Trail, in celebration of the trail's 200th anniversary. The competition has teams of college students design, build, and drive solar-powered vehicles in a cross-country time/distance event. Source: Green & Grey Report, Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site

- *Virgin Islands National Park* - The park announced that there will be a competitive lease process to redevelop Caneel Bay Resort. The resort will pass hands from its current owners, CBI Acquisitions, to the NPS in 2023 under a unique Retained Use Estate agreement that came with the 150 acres donated by Laurance Rockefeller in 1983. The lease process and a new Environmental Assessment will launch in November to help guide the vision for the resort. Source: *Virgin Islands Daily News*

- *Voyageurs National Park* - The park is working to remove several hundred acres of hybrid cattails. While native cattails are an important part of the ecosystem, the hybrid cattails are invasive and take over many native species and create hazards for boaters. Source: *MPR News*

- *Yellowstone National Park* - The park is celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Hayden Expedition, which played an important role in the park's establishment through scientific evidence and artistic renderings of the landscape that were brought back to Congress in 1871. The park, the DOI, and the USGS are commemorating the occasion with a social media campaign and an exhibition of Thomas Moran's famous works from that expedition. Source: *Jackson Hole News and Guide*

- *Yellowstone National Park* - The park is actively expanding tribal presence and engagement within the park to better collaborate on future park actions and affirm cultural connections to the park. A listening session was held in April, and a series of events took place in June to strengthen relationships and create a vision for the future. Source: *Wyoming News Now*

Personnel Changes

- *Arkansas Post National Memorial* - Ron Fields was selected as the new superintendent. He has 13 years of NPS experience, most recently as the Integrated Natural and Cultural Resource Specialist at Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument. He will start his new position in mid-September. Source: Arkansas Post National Memorial

- *Jewel Cave National Monument* - Kevin Tillman was selected as the new superintendent. He has 30 years of NPS experience, most recently as superintendent of Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument. He will start his new position in mid-September. Source: *DRGNews*

- *Lava Beds National Monument, Tule Lake National Monument* - Chris Mengel was selected as the new superintendent. He has 30 years of NPS experience, most recently as chief ranger at Black Canyon of the Gunnison and Curecanti. He will start his new position in late August. Source: Lava Beds National Park

- *Mesa Verde National Park, Yucca House National Monument* - Kayci Cook Collins has been selected as the new superintendent. She has 35 years of NPS experience and was most recently the superintendent of the Flagstaff Area National Monuments. She will start her new position on August 29. Source: Mesa Verde National Park

- *National Interagency Fire Center* - Joyelyn "Joy" Sommer has been selected as the administrative support assistant for the Division of Fire and Aviation. She has over 10 years of DOI experience and was most recently a human resources assistant with the Department of Interior FIRES Program at the NIFC. Source: National Park Service

- *Pearl Harbor National Memorial* - Tom Leatherman has been selected as the new superintendent. Tom has over 30 years of NPS experience and was most recently the superintendent of four sites in the East Bay Area - Eugene O'Neill NHS, John Muir NHS, Port Chicago Naval Magazine NM, and Rosie the Riveter/WWII Home Front NHP. Source: Pearl Habor National Memorial

- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - Colleen Bathe, the Chief of Interpretation, Education, and Partnerships, retired on July 31 after a 36-year career with the NPS. Source: *The Ceres Courier*

- *South Atlantic-Gulf Region* - Stan Austin, the South Atlantic Gulf Regional Director, retired on July 31 after a 43-year federal service career. Source: Green & Grey Report, National Park Service

Park People

Here we honor deceased park employees, as well as important news about Coalition Members. People are listed alphabetically by last name.

Deceased

- Phyllis Gould, one of the first "Rosies" to be hired at the Kaiser Shipyard in Richmond, CA during WWII, passed away on July 20 at age 99. She was instrumental in the establishment of Rosie the Riveter World War II Homefront National Historical Park. Source: *SFist*

- Hooper Wilkins Morrow, 79, passed away on July 29. He worked for a number of national park units and national wildlife refuges, as well as several state parks. Source: *Legacy*

- Ronnie J.R. Vaughn, 74, passed away on July 27. He worked for the NPS for 25 years. Source: *The Sentinel-Record*

In the News

- Debra Osterberg, a former employee at many national park units, was recently selected as the new curator for the Capitola Historical Museum. Source: *TPG Online Daily*

- Bill Saul, a volunteer for River Raisin National Battlefield Park who received recognition by the NPS for outstanding volunteer service in 2012, recently was recognized by the Monroe County Fair Board for Meritorious Service. He has dedicated much of his retirement to volunteering with a number of organizations. Source: *The Monroe News*

Open for Comment

Items will stay on this list until public comment has closed.

- *Bryce Canyon National Park* - Public comment is now open on a proposal to increase backcountry camping permit fees from $5 per person to $15 for a permit, plus $7 per person per day. Comments are open until September 6. Source: Bryce Canyon National Park

- *Death Valley National Park* - Public comment is now open on a draft Air Tour Management Plan to comply with the National Parks Air Tour Management Act of 2000. Comments are open until August 28. Source: *Federal Register*

- *Everglades National Park* - Public comment is now open on a draft Air Tour Management Plan to comply with the National Parks Air Tour Management Act of 2000. Comments are open until August 28. Source: *Federal Register*

- *Great Basin National Park* - Public comment is now open on the Environmental Assessment for the Strawberry Creek Restoration Project. Comments are open until September 6. Source: Great Basin National Park

- *Guadalupe Mountains National Park* - Public comment is now open on a new proposed fee for overnight Wilderness Use Permits. They are currently free and would move to $6 per permit, plus $6 per person per night. Comments are open until September 12. Source: Guadalupe Mountains National Park

- *Jewel Cave National Monument, Wind Cave National Park* - Public comment is now open on a proposed increase in fees for cave tours and camping. Comments are open until September 7. Source: Wind Cave National Park

- *Mount Rainier National Park* - Public comment is now open on a transportation and visitor use management plan for the Nisqually to Paradise travel corridor. Comments are open until September 14. Source: Mount Rainier National Park

- *Mount Rainier National Park* - Public comment is now open on a draft Air Tour Management Plan to comply with the National Parks Air Tour Management Act of 2000. Comments are open until August 28. Source: *Federal Register*

- *Olympic National Park* - Public comment is now open on the Quillayute River Restoration - Reach 3 Environmental Assessment. The project focuses on redirecting river flows, habitat restoration, and bank stabilization, and mostly takes place on tribal trust land under management of the Quileute Tribe. A portion of the project takes place in the park. The Bureau of Indian Affairs Northwest Region and Natural Resources Conservation Service are cooperating agencies. Comments are open until August 22. Source: Olympic National Park

- *Olympic National Park* - Public comment is now open on a draft Air Tour Management Plan to comply with the National Parks Air Tour Management Act of 2000. Comments are open until August 28. Source: *Federal Register*

- *Pearl Harbor National Memorial* - Public comment is now open for a proposal to implement paid parking at the park for $7 per vehicle. Entrance to the visitor center and memorial will remain free. Comments are open until August 30. Source: *Honolulu Star Advertiser*

- *Rock Creek Park* - Public comment is now open for the future management of Beach Drive, which has undergone various management strategies of pedestrians and car traffic in its history. Comments are open until August 22. Source: *WUSA9*

- *Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway* - Public comment is now open for a proposed trail connection in the town of Cable on an abandoned railroad grade. Comments are open until September 14. Source: Ashland Daily Press

- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - Public comment is now open for a Draft Accessibility Self Evaluation and Transition Plan. Comments are open until August 27. Source: *Sierra Sun Times*

Other Department of Interior News

- *Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Bryan Newland visits Chaco Canyon area* - Newland met with tribal leaders and other stakeholders in the region to discuss land conservation, energy development, drought impacts, and water infrastructure. Included in his trip was a site visit to Chaco Culture National Historical Park. Source: Department of Interior

- *DOI celebrates 1 year anniversary of Great American Outdoors Act* - August 4 was designated "Great American Outdoors Day", and entrance fees were waived at all fee-collecting public lands for the day. Source: Department of Interior

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.

Senate Actions

July 27 – The *Committee on Energy and Natural Resources* concluded a hearing to examine the President's proposed budget request for fiscal year 2022 for the Department of the Interior, after receiving testimony from Deb Haaland, Secretary of the Interior.

July 28 – The *Committee on Energy and Natural Resources:* Subcommittee on National Parks concluded a hearing to examine the impacts of overcrowding in our national parks on park resources and visitor experiences, focusing on strategic approaches to visitor use management, after receiving testimony from Michael T. Reynolds, Regional Director for Interior Regions 6, 7, and 8, National Park Service, Department of the Interior; Kristen Brengel, National Parks Conservation Association, Washington, D.C.; and Kevin O. Gartland, Chamber of Commerce, Whitefish, Montana.

August 3 – *The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources:* Committee concluded a hearing to examine the nominations of Geraldine Richmond, of Oregon, to be Under Secretary for Science, who was introduced by Senator Wyden, and Asmeret Asefaw Berhe, of California, to be Director of the Office of Science, both of the Department of Energy, and Cynthia Weiner Stachelberg, of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Policy Management and Budget, after the nominees testified and answered questions in their own behalf.

House Actions

July 26 – The House passed H.R. 2365, to extend the authority for the establishment of a commemorative work in the District of Columbia in honor of Gold Star Families, by a vote of 412 yeas with none voting nay.

July 27 – The *Committee on Natural Resources:* Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held a hearing entitled "The Toxic Legacy of the Mining Law of 1872''. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

July 29 – The House passed H.R. 4502, making appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, by a yea-and-nay vote of 219 yeas to 208 nays. This legislation was the vehicle used to pass several other appropriations bills including the FY 2022 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. See the July 1 entry for the House Appropriations Committee in the Coalition Report of July 14 for a summary of the major provisions applicable to the NPS.

During House floor consideration of H.R. 4502, the following additional amendments were adopted:

- Nadler amendment to add $3 million to the 9/11 National Memorial Grants program.
- Neguse amendment to add $2 million for the Wildland Fire Management program.
- Schrier amendment to add $2 million to the Wildland Fire Management Council to address fire reimbursement challenges with state and local governments.

July 29 – The House passed the following:

- H.R. 2278, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to designate the September 11th National Memorial Trail, by a vote of 423 yeas with none voting nay.
- H.R. 2497, to establish the Amache National Historic Site in the State of Colorado as a unit of the National Park System, by a vote of 416 yeas to 2 nays.
- H.R. 4300, to direct the Secretary of the Interior to make free National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Passes available to members of the Armed Forces, by a vote of 420 yeas with none voting nay.

July 29 – The *Committee on Natural Resources*: Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife held a hearing on a number of bills including H.R. 2793, to extend through FY 2028 the Highlands Conservation Act, which provides for land conservation in Highlands states (i.e., Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania); and H.R. 2872, to establish an integrated national approach to respond to ongoing and expected effects of extreme weather and climate change by protecting, managing, and conserving the fish, wildlife, and plants of the United States, and to maximize Government efficiency and reduce costs, in cooperation with State, local, and Tribal Governments and other entities.

Testimony was heard from Representatives Young, Panetta, Dingell, Murphy of Florida, and Blumenauer; Janet Coit, Assistant Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, Acting Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, and Deputy National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce; Stephen Guertin, Deputy Director for Policy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior; and public witnesses.

Incidents

Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park. Where multiple sources are listed, the information evolved over the course of the two weeks this report was being compiled.

Arches National Park
TV star assists hiker that fainted

On August 7, a hiker became light-headed due to dehydration while on her way to Delicate Arch. She fainted, fell off the rock she was sitting on, and landed face-first on slickrock. Julie Bowen, who plays Claire Dunphy on the popular television show "Modern Family", and her sister, a doctor, responded and treated the hiker's injuries and gave her electrolytes and snacks. The hiker was taken to Moab Hospital, where she was diagnosed with a fractured nose and given five stitches.

Big South Fork National River & Recreation Area
Visitor dies from 100-foot climbing fall

On August 9, a visitor died from injuries sustained by a 100-foot fall while free solo climbing* with a friend near Twin Arches. Personnel from local emergency response and NPS staff recovered the body. Source: Big South Fork National River & Recreation Area

**Editor note: The NPS erroneously called it "free-climbing" in their press release. However, the climber was reported to have been climbing without ropes or other equipment, which is more accurately known as "free soloing." "Free climbing" is a style of climbing in which the climber does not use any gear for mechanical advantage to ascend the rock, but they do use harnesses, ropes, and devices to catch the climber in the event of a fall.*

Buffalo National River
2 plead guilty for damaging historic mines

On July 27, two men pleaded guilty to felony violations of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act for illegal excavations in the Historic Rush Mining District, and the sale of stolen geological and mineral specimens. The pair dug for rocks on multiple occasions in 2015 and 2016 until a ranger observed evidence of their excavations while they were camped in the park. An investigation revealed entry into the Monte Cristo Mine and Morning Star/Ben Carney Mine. Resource damage is estimated at $22,241. Source: United States Attorney's Office, Western District of Arkansas

Death Valley National Park
Hiker found dead

On July 25 or 26, Douglas Branham, 68, set out to hike 12 miles across the salt flats from Badwater to West Side Road and back. A family member called the Inn at Death Valley on the morning of July 28 after he missed his flight home the day prior. His belongings were still in his room and rangers found his vehicle at the Badwater parking lot. A California Highway Patrol helicopter found and recovered his body later that day. The heat was up to 118 degrees with humidity as high as 91% over the two-day period he is suspected to have been hiking in. The Inyo County Coroner's Office is investigating the cause of death. Source: *NewsNow Las Vegas*

Blue Ridge Parkway
Teenager killed in vehicle accident

Alexis Bolduc, 18, died on July 26 while riding in a vehicle that left the road and crashed. The driver was hospitalized with minor injuries. A preliminary investigation shows the car was traveling southbound in a downhill curve when it left the road and landed on a guardrail. Further investigation is ongoing. Source: *U.S. News*

Blue Ridge Parkway
Man killed in motorcycle crash

On July 31, Shawn Emory, 39, lost control on a curve and struck the guard rail before being thrown from the motorcycle. With the above accident, nine people have died in traffic accidents on the parkway in 2021; five of those involved motorcycles. Source: *U.S. News*

Cape Hatteras National Seashore
Man dies in kayak accident

On August 3, a kayak with three riders capsized in the Pamlico Sound. Two of the kayakers returned safely to shore and reported the other as missing. His body was eventually retrieved by a rescue diver. Source: *WDRB*

Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park
Man pleads guilty to drug trafficking

On July 29, Jeffery Whitmire, 37, pleaded guilty to possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine in the park for an incident on December 27, 2020 in which three people were found loitering in the park after hours adjacent to a vehicle with six ounces of meth, scales, baggies, drug paraphernalia, a magnetic hidden compartment, and a handgun. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison and 20 years of probation, as well as $370,150 in fines and restitution. Source: *WTVC*

Cumberland Gap National Historical Park
Teenager goes missing, is found 3 days later

On July 26, a 13-year-old girl went missing from Wilderness Road Campground. A second teenager, a 15-year-old boy, went missing earlier that day from nearby Speedwell, Tennessee.   The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, Claiborne County Sheriff's Office, Lee County Sheriff's Office, Virginia State Parks, Virginia State Police, and NPS conducted an extensive search, and they were found safe together on July 30 in a local area to the park. Details about the events leading to their disappearance have not been released. Source: *WATE*, *KWWL*

Dinosaur National Monument
Yampa Bench Road closes due to flashflooding

On August 3, thunderstorms washed out several areas of the Yampa Bench Road. It is currently closed from the east boundary to the junction with Echo Park Road until further notice. The park is working with Moffat County's Road Department to fix the road. No opening date has been set yet. Source: Dinosaur National Monument

Lake Powell National Recreation Area
Father drowns after helping his children out of water

On August 5, a family of four was touring Warm Creek Bay on a rented ski boat. Two children without personal flotation devices jumped into the water and then began to struggle. Their father, Phil Chiang, 49, jumped into the water to assist his children. He helped them return to the boat, then disappeared under the water. He was also not wearing a personal flotation device. Nearby boats assisted in a search, and he was found 10 minutes later underwater. He was taken to a beach and CPR was started. NPS staff arrived on scene, as well as Classic Air Medical's helicopter team. Chiang was pronounced dead at the scene. Source: *St. George News*

Katmai National Park & Preserve
Plane crashes during takeoff

On August 2, a Cessna 206 on floats crashed while taking off from an unnamed pond near Kukaklek Lake. It struck the bank of the pond while ascending. Four people were aboard the plane and one person sustained a minor injury. The plane was operated by Branch River Air. Source: *Anchorage Daily News*

New River Gorge National Park & Preserve
3 people break into historic building

On July 31, cameras captured three people breaking into a National Historic Building in the park. The park is seeking any information the public may have about the individuals or incident. Source: *WVNS*

North Cascades National Park
Bear Creek Fire grows

The Bear Creek Fire, which was first detected on July 30 in the Chilliwak drainage/ Hannagen Pass Trail area) has grown to about 1,000 acres. The fire has been mostly contained by cooler temperatures and moisture in the area. There is a team of firefighters using a confine-and-contain strategy. The cause of the fire is under investigation and, specifically, the park is looking for information on a hiker who accessed the trailhead on bicycle that day. Source: *goSkagit*, North Cascades National Park

Obed Wild & Scenic River
Visitor drowns while fishing from kayak

On August 1, a visitor drowned while fishing from an inflatable kayak in calm water. The victim had a life jacket in the boat, but was not wearing it and reportedly could not swim. The victim's body was found the next day by an underwater drone. An investigation is underway, but the park has stated that initial evidence indicates it was an accidental drowning. Source: Obed Wild & Scenic River

Olympic National Park

Backpacker found alive after four day search

On August 4, Cheri Keller, 56, went missing. She was backpacking with a group of 4 other hikers near Home Sweet Home camp in the southeastern region of the park, and became separated as the group hiked toward Camp Pleasant. Aviation resources were not able to search until the fourth day due to weather and low cloud cover, but on August 8, a King County Sheriff's Office helicopter spotted her in the basin to the east of Mt. Steel, and was able to land and transport her to safety. The search involved personnel from NPS (Olympic and North Cascades), Olympic Mountain Rescue, Tacoma Mountain Rescue, Mason County Search and Rescue, and Washington State Search and Rescue Planning Unit. Source: *Komo News*, Olympic National Park, *The Olympian*

Pinnacles National Park

Wildfire breaks out

A fire began on July 28 off Highway 146 near the West Pinnacles Visitor Contact Station. By July 31, it was 100% contained at 171 acres. The west entrance of the park and all hiking trails that lead to the west side closed temporarily and are now open. The cause of the fire is under investigation. Source: *East Bay Times*, Cal Fire

Point Reyes National Seashore

Boater and 6 dogs rescued after boat goes aground

On August 3, a 30-foot boat went aground on the west side of Tomales Point. A member of the public reported it to the Coast Guard. The boat's captain and his six dogs were rescued by the Marin County Fire Department and transferred to a Coast Guard boat, and the man was taken to a local hospital for treatment for hypothermia. Source: *KRON4*

Rocky Mountain National Park

Hiker survives 20-foot fall

On July 26, a hiker fell 20 feet while rock scrambling near Balanced Rock. She was able to call for help from her own phone. NPS personnel responded and felt her injuries needed additional support, so she was hoisted via winch and cable from a Colorado National Guard helicopter, transferred to a Med Evac air ambulance, and flown to Medical Center of the Rockies for treatment. Source: *Daily Camera*

Sequoia National Park

3 hikers rescued by helicopter on Mt. Whitney

On July 27, three day hikers on top of Mt. Whitney became hypothermic after their clothes became wet. Other visitors gave them supplies and a tent to survive the night and called the emergency in. The next morning, a California National Guard Chinook helicopter crew with 3 Inyo County Search and Rescue team members was able to find them quickly. The helicopter touched down with only its rear wheels on the mountain, and the crew was able to safely load the hikers and fly them to Bishop Airport. Source: *Recordnet*

Sequoia National Park

Man charged with violent crimes

On February 19, Marvin Joseph Chang, 33, assaulted an individual with a firearm, slashed the tire of a car in a parking lot in the park, and led law enforcement officers on a high-speed chase outside the park that allegedly resulted in the shooting of a California Highway Patrol officer. On August 5, Chang was indicted by a federal grand jury on four counts. He is currently in custody in Tulare County. Source: *Sierra Sun Times*

Yellowstone National Park

Woman faces charges for disturbing grizzly bear

On May 15, a group of tourists at Roaring Mountain was approached by a grizzly and two cubs. The group returned to their vehicles, except for one woman, who was warned by the others to get back. She did not, and was charged by the sow grizzly. Video of the encounter was shared widely on social media and the park posted a photo of her on May 25, asking for more information. They got a tip from someone who had seen the woman tagged on a posting of the video, and she will now face charges of intentionally disturbing wildlife and violating closures and use limits. She has not yet entered a plea and the first court appearance will be on August 26. Source: *ABC 7 Chicago*

Yellowstone National Park

Park experiences over 1,000 earthquakes

The U.S. Geological Survey reported that more than a thousand minor quakes occurred around Yellowstone last month. They are the most quakes reported at the park since 2017. Source: *WSILTV*

Yosemite National Park

Lightning storms cause multiple fires

On July 30 and 31, lightning caused 10 small wildfires along Tioga Rd from White Wolf Campground southwest to Crane Flat, now collectively known as the Mather Complex. The fires range in size from 1/10th to 1/4 of an acre. Lightning on July 31 also started the Mono Fire, located near Ostrander Lake, and the Tiltill Fire, located near Tiltill Valley, north of Hetch Hechy. All are being suppressed using a "confine and contain" strategy, except the Tiltill Fire, which is at 1,610 acres and 45% contained as of August 10, and is being fully suppressed. There is currently a trail closure between Lake Vernon and Tiltill Valley. There are no current threats to infrastructure. Source: *Sierra Sun Times* (8/2), *Sierra Sun*

Times (8/3), InciWeb (8/10)

Zion National Park
5 shuttle drivers quit after verbal abuse

At a park update meeting with the gateway community of Springdale, Superintendent Jeff Bradybaugh said five shuttle bus drivers have quit due to verbal abuse by visitors over the mask mandate. Source: *St. George Spectrum*

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Lassen National Park* - The Dixie Fire has grown to 487,764 acres and is 25% contained, as of August 10. It is now the second largest wildfire in California history, and has destroyed dozens of homes, including much of the historic town of Greenville. Lassen National Park is now entirely closed due to its activity on the east side of the park. The 91-year-old Mount Harkness fire lookout was destroyed in the fire. Sources: *News Center 1*, *SFGate*, CalFire

- *Sequoia National Park* - The body of Matthew Thoke, the hiker who went missing on July 21 near Crescent Meadow, was found. The park has not released details of location or the circumstances of his death. They stated that "his body was in a location that was not visible by air and hardly visible on the ground." Search efforts were conducted by 13 agencies in steep, thick vegetation and had been scaled back the previous week. Source: Visalia Times Delta, *ABC 30*

- *Yosemite National Park* - The search for Richard Judd, who went missing while day hiking to Red Peak Pass from a base camp in the Lower Merced Pass Lake area on July 25, has been scaled back to "limited continuous search mode." A day pack and other clues have been found and are being investigated. Source: *Merced Sun Star*

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- Issue Contributors: Bill Walters

If you see something that might be of interest to Coalition members, send it to report@protectnps.org.

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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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