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

The Coalition Report
Wednesday, November 3, 2021

Coalition Actions

The Coalition has just launched its 2021 George B. Harzog Award Nominations. Each year, we recognize significant contributions by individuals or groups supporting the mission of the National Park Service. Nominations are open now through November 30, 2021.
https://protectnps.org/coalition-launches-2021-george-b-hartzog-award-nominations/

We joined our partners in submitting comments regarding the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Air Quality's Proposed Regional Haze State Implementation Plan for North Carolina Class I Areas for the Second Planning Period (2019 – 2028):
https://protectnps.org/2021/10/19/comments-on-north-carolinas-proposed-regional-haze-state-implementation-plan/

The Coalition submitted scoping comments regarding the proposed Lava Ridge Wind Project, which would construct up to 400 wind turbines (with a maximum of 740 feet) within 5-20 miles of Minidoka National Historic Site. This proposed wind farm would be highly visible, dominate the landscape, and overwhelm the scenic vistas immediately north and northeast of Minidoka NHS:
https://protectnps.org/2021/10/20/comments-regarding-the-proposed-lava-ridge-wind-project/

We recently joined a letter signed by 155 groups thanking President Biden and key leaders in the administration for restoring Bears Ears, Grand Staircase-Escalante, and Northeast Canyons and Seamounts national monuments, and encouraging them to take future actions in pursuit of the administration's goal of protecting "America the Beautiful":
https://protectnps.org/2021/10/21/coalition-signs-on-to-national-monument-thank-you-letter/

Coalition Chair Phil Francis and Kristen Brengel of the National Parks Conservation Association joined a National Parks Traveler podcast to discuss the nomination and hearing of Mr. Charles Sams:
https://protectnps.org/2021/10/25/npt-episode-141-is-charles-sams-the-next-national-park-service-director/

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.

- *NPS Director Nominee Senate Hearing* - On October 19, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing to consider Charles F. Sams III as the nominee to be National Park Service Director. The hearing lasted two hours. Sams outlined his priorities as director: improving staff morale and supporting staff work, spreading visitation to less-visited parks, and creating more employee housing. Source: *National Parks Traveler*

- *NPS signs cooperative agreement with American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association* - The five-year agreement is meant to facilitate more meaningful dialogue between the Tribes and the National Park Service through virtual and in-person forums between NPS and Native nations in park gateway communities. Source: National Park Service

- *Biden to rescind Trump-era regulations about Endangered Species Act* - On October 26, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a proposal to rescind a rule that redefined critical habitat and required the agency to take into account economic impacts, as well as a rule that removed automatic protections for species designated as "threatened." Public comment is now open through November 26 on the proposal. Source: *National Parks Traveler*

- *NPS implements COVID-19 guidance for commercial service providers* - In accordance with Executive Order 14042, the NPS has posted guidelines for contractors, park partners, and other entities existing in contract-like instruments that will begin December 8. It includes a requirement to be vaccinated against COVID-19, as well as guidance around shared housing, social distancing, occupancy in commercial service buildings, etc. Source: National Park Service

- *NPS hires contractor to develop augmented reality app* - Media Fusion, LLC, has been awarded a contract by the DOI to develop augmented reality technology into the NPS App so that parks can add content to enhance a visitor's experience. An example is that users could "drop" an object into an environment while on site, such as a historic building that used to stand at a certain location. The contractor will pilot the technology at a couple of sites, and then parks should be able to create and integrate their own content into the app. Source: *Auganix*

- *GAO rules that 2019 Fourth of July events were appropriately financed* - On October 19, the U.S. Government Accountability Office released a decision that the DOI did not violate the purpose statute when it obligated Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) appropriations for expenses associated with 2019 Fourth of July events, nor when it obligated Centennial Challenge funds for the fireworks. Source: U.S. Government Accountability Office

- *Critical needs of NPS law enforcement - National Parks Traveler* and *Government Executive* published an op-ed by Paul D. Berkowitz, a retired NPS Supervisory Special Agent, outlining the staffing shortages and training gaps of law enforcement rangers in national parks. Source: *National Parks Traveler, Government Executive*

- *Scout Ranger program is NPS' "best kept secret"- Scouting Magazine* published an article highlighting the Resource Stewardship Scout Ranger program, which has Cub Scouts and Scouts participate in educational or service projects in national parks. Source: *Scouting Magazine*

Around the Parks

Park reports are in alphabetical order.

- *Acadia National Park* - On October 29, the park completed a full rehabilitation of all 45 miles of historic carriage roads. The final section was the 6-mile Eagle Lake Loop. Friends of Acadia granted over $5 million to the NPS to support the project, and other funding came from federal construction appropriations. Source: Acadia National Park

- *Acadia National Park* - On October 31, *NPR* ran a short piece on "Weekend Edition Sunday" about a bridge that washed out on the Maple Springs Trail due to climate change-related flash flooding, and whether or not replacing it is prudent due to the likelihood of future flooding. The piece included interviews with trail foreman Gary Stellpflug and chief of maintenance Keith Johnston. Source: *NPR*

- *Bandelier National Monument - Los Alamos Reporter* profiled new superintendent Patrick Suddath, who recently met with the Los Alamos County Councilors to discuss challenges and opportunities at the park and with the local community. Source: *Los Alamos Reporter*

- *Big Bend National Park* - Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD) surveyed bighorn sheep and barbary sheep (aoudads) in the park last week, utilizing helicopters. Barbary sheep are non-native and can impact native bighorn sheep populations, and TPWD has previously utilized lethal control methods to support bighorns. They will not be using lethal control this year, but the surveys will help guide future management decisions. Source: Big Bend National Park

- *Cumberland Island National Seashore* - The Federal Aviation Administration has once again pushed back its decision about Spaceport Camden due to "ongoing consultation efforts." This is at least the third delay and the new plan is to release the decision by December 15. The park and the DOI have publicly objected to the project due to the inherent risks to the park from rockets exploding. Source: *The Washington Post*

- *Everglades National Park* - Members of the Florida congressional delegation have written to President Biden and Secretary of Interior Deb Haaland to conduct full Environmental Impact Statements and deny operations permits to advance new oil drilling in the Everglades, as proposed by Burnett Oil Co. Source: *Florida Daily*

- *Glacier National Park* - A study by NPS scientists over the summer found a small amount of microplastics in Lake McDonald. Source: *Hungry Horse News*

- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - The NPS has announced publicly that it has dropped its plan to impose parking fees at Stinson Beach and other coastal lots in the park due to a large amount of feedback from local officials and community members. Public comment has ended and the NPS is still considering other parts of the plan, such as fees for evening tours at Point Bonita Lighthouse and parking fees at the northwest commuter lot at Golden Gate Bridge. Source: *Point Reyes Light*

- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - On October 28, the NPS opened a new exhibit on Alcatraz Island called, "The Big Lock Up: Mass Incarceration in the United States," which tells the story of the prison system through the voices of formerly incarcerated people, scholars, and criminal justice advocates. The exhibit was funded through a combination of NPS funding, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy donations, and Alcatraz City Cruises concession fees. Source: Golden Gate National Recreation Area

- *Grand Teton National Park* - On October 20, the Teton Range bighorn sheep working group, made up of representatives from the NPS, U.S. Forest Service, and Wyoming Game and Fish Department, hosted a meeting to discuss their recent findings and recommendations (also found in this recommendation report) within Grand Teton, Caribou-Targhee National Forest, and Bridger-Teton National Forest. Source: *Buckrail*

- *Greenbelt Park* - After a 2-year rehabilitation, the park will reopen to vehicles, camping, and picnicking. The rehab includes new roads, a new bridge, a renovated ranger station, and improved campsites. Source: Greenbelt Park

- *Joshua Tree National Park - Smithsonian Magazine* published an article chronicling the history of the park, the modern threats to its iconic trees, and the efforts to protect them. Source: *Smithsonian Magazine*

- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - On October 18, Vice President Kamala Harris toured Lake Mead and discussed the Biden Administration's efforts to tackle climate change. Source: *Fox 40*

- *Mammoth Cave National Park* - The *Daily Journal Online* published an article describing the work of two cave cartographers at the park to map its passages since the 1980s. Source: *Daily Journal Online*

- *Mammoth Cave National Park* - The park was certified as an International Dark-Sky Park. It is the first site in Kentucky to receive this designation. Source: Mammoth Cave National Park

- *Pearl Harbor National Memorial* - The lottery for public access to the site's 75th Commemoration Ceremony on December 7 (livestreamed in-person at the visitor center) is taking place on Recreation.gov from November 1-10. The digitally randomized drawing will take place on November 12. Source: Pearl Harbor National Memorial

- *President's Park (White House)* - On October 30, a new National Christmas Tree was planted at the park. The tree is a 27-foot white fir and was donated by Hill View Christmas Tree Farm in MIddleburg, PA. The previous true, a Colorado blue spruce, succumbed to needle cast disease. Source: President's Park (White House)

- *Santa Fe National Historic Trail* - The Santa Fe Trail Association recently gave out awards at the SFTA Symposium. An Award of Appreciation was presented to NPS interns Ashley Wheeler and Jessica Ostfeld, for their efforts at creating promotional items and the American Solar Challenge, respectively. Source: *WIBW*

- *Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* - On September 8, park staff captured its 99th mountain lion as part of its ongoing research since 2002. The individual was given a physical checkup and radio collar and scientists collected biological samples. P-99, as the individual is being called, is a 2-3 year-old female. Source: *Nature World News*

- *Saratoga National Historical Park* - Veterans with American Veterans Archaeological Recovery have been participating in a dig at the Second Battle of Saratoga site to look for Revolutionary War artifacts. Source: *Fox 40*

- *Sitka National Historical Park* - The town of Sitka is hoping to revive a local bear working group to look look for solutions to mitigate growing bear-human interactions. 12 brown bears have been killed by wildlife authorities this year, and a 13th was killed by a car. A biologist suggests that the lack of visitors during the pandemic has made the park a "wildlife refuge" for the bears, which has brought them closer to town. The Sitka Fish & Game Advisory Committee urged the Sitka Assembly to address the bear problem and has asked the state Board of Game to conduct a bear population study on the island. Source: *KTOO*

- *Thomas Jefferson Memorial - The Washington Post* published an article outlining how the dome and marble surfaces of the Jefferson Memorial were restored from a biofilm of bacteria, fungi, and algae that was taking over the building. Source: *The Washington Post*

- *USS Inaugural* (a National Historic Landmark) - Low water levels on the Mississippi River have exposed the USS Inaugural near downtown St. Louis. The ship, a WWII minesweeper, used to be a National Historic Landmark open for tours while moored in St. Louis until it broke free during record-high water levels in 1993. It has been exposed twice previously due to low water levels. The NPS had originally hoped to salvage the wreck and restore it, but it was not feasible and has been determined to be a total loss. It is eventually to be salvaged for scrap metal and museum exhibition purposes. Source: *Rochester First*

- *Yellowstone National Park - USA Today* published an article describing the effects of staff shortages on the park during record visitation over the summer. Source: *USA Today*

- *Zion National Park* - The private-public partnership called East Zion Initiative opened its first mountain bike trail, located just outside the park. The project is meant to disperse heavy visitation to the park. The land was donated by a private family, and has engaged Kane County, Zion Forever, and other local stakeholders. A visitor center will eventually be built there, which will be staffed by NPS. Source: *Salt Lake Tribune*

Personnel Changes

- *Acadia National Park, St. Croix Island International Historic Site* - Brandon Bies was selected as the Deputy Superintendent. He was most recently the superintendent at Manassas National Battlefield Park, and brings experience in congressional affairs, park management, cultural resources, and park partnerships. Source: Acadia National Park

- *Alaska Region (Region 11)* - Lindy Mihata has been selected as the Associate

Regional Director of Operations. She has 27 years of NPS experience, most recently as the Alaska Regional Chief Ranger since 2016. Source: National Park Service Region 11

Park People

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

Deceased

- On October 13, Earl Old Person passed away. Old Person was an Honorary Lifetime Chief of the Blackfeet Nation, serving as the chairman of its tribal council for 34 years. He was also president of the National Congress of American Indians. Glacier National Park Superintendent Jeff Mow said it was a "tremendous honor to know Chief Old Person professionally and as a friend." Source: *Great Falls Tribune*

Open for Comment

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

- *Bay Area National Parks (Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Muir Woods National Monument, Point Reyes National Seashore, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park)* - Public comment is now open on a proposed Air Tour Management Plan that covers all four parks. Comments are open until November 15. Source: Golden Gate National Recreation Area

- *Denali National Park* - Public comment is now open on proposed development of trails and related infrastructure in the area between the Nenana River and the Parks Highway. Comments are open until November 24. Source: *National Parks Traveler*

- *National Capital Parks - East* - Public comment is now open on an Environmental Assessment to reduce overabundant deer populations to promote healthy and diverse forests and protect native plants at several national parks in Washington, D.C. and Maryland. Comments are open until November 8. Source: *The DC Line*

- *Ozark National Scenic Riverways* - Public comment is now open on a plan to change camping fees and cave tour fees for the Round Spring Cave. Comments are open until November 30. Source: Ozark National Scenic Riverways

- *Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway* - Public comment is now open a plan to improve the Fairy Falls Day Use Area. Comments are open until November 21. Source: Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway

- *Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* - Public comment is now open on an Environmental Assessment for the redevelopment of sites burned in the 2018 Woolsey Fire. Comments are open until November 24. Source: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

- *Theodore Roosevelt National Park* - Public comment is now open on site plans for several developed areas of the park: Painted Canyon Overlook, South Unit and North Unit entrances, Peaceful Valley Ranch, and Elkhorn Ranch Unit. Comments are open until November 30. Source: *Bismarck Tribune*

Other Department of Interior News

- *DOI releases guidelines for new Indian Youth Service Corps* - The Department of Interior released draft guidelines for the Indian Youth Service Corps, which was established under the 2019 John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act. They will be consulting with indigenous groups on the program. Source: Department of Interior

- *President Biden announces USFWS Director Nominee* - On October 21, President Biden announced Martha Williams as the nominee for Director of Fish and Wildlife Services. She is currently the Principal Deputy Director of USFWS, and was previously the Director of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, a law professor at the University of Montana, and Deputy Solicitor Parks and Wildlife at the DOI. Source: The White House

- *DOI and USDA deny mining near Boundary Waters* - The Department of Interior and Department of Agriculture announced that they will bar the issuing of new prospecting and leasing for mining-related activities adjacent to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, which is a part of the Superior National Forest. The Bureau of Land Management manages the subsurface rights in Superior National Forest, and also accepted the application from the USFS to withdraw an area from consideration under mineral and geothermal leasing laws. The DOI has authority to withdraw lands for up to 20 years from new mineral permits and leases, subject to renewal, and Congress can legislate permanent withdrawal. Source: *E&E News*

- *OIED and DOI give $2.1 million in tourism grants for Native communities* - On October 19, the Office of Indian Economic Development and Department of Interior announced grants for 18 American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and tribal organizations, and two Native Hawaiian organizations through the Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience (NATIVE) Act. Source: United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs

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 13 – The president signed into law H.R. 2278, to designate the September 11th National Memorial Trail Route (Public Law 117–48).

Senate Actions

October 18 – The *Committee on Energy and Natural Resources* concluded a hearing to examine three nominations, including Charles F. Sams III, of Oregon, to be Director of the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, who was introduced by Senator Wyden, after the nominees testified and answered questions in their own behalf.

October 18 – The *Committee on Appropriations* released the text of its recommended funding levels for the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, FY 2022. It is unclear if the committee will actually consider and approve the bill formally, or, as has often been done in the past, just use these numbers as a starting point when it meets with the House Appropriations Committee later in the year to agree on final numbers for the bill that then will be incorporated into an omnibus appropriations bill. The House version of the bill was incorporated, with a couple of other appropriations bills, into H.R. 4502, which was approved by the House on July 29.

Under the Senate recommended numbers, the NPS will receive $1.25 billion in mandatory appropriations from the Legacy Restoration Fund of the Great American Outdoors Act to help address the NPS deferred maintenance backlog.

The Senate bill recommends $422.3 million in mandatory appropriations from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for federal land acquisition, state assistance, and various grant programs (The House bill appropriates $452.3 million). The Senate bill divides the funding as follows:

- State Conservation Grants - $180 million (House bill has $200.3 million)
- LWCF Outdoor Recreation Legacy Grants - $107 million (House bill has $115 million)
- State Conservation Grants Administration - $12.7 million (House bill has $12.4 million)
- American Battlefield Protection Program - $20 million (same as House bill)
- Acquisition Management - $14.5 million (same as House bill)
- Recreational Access - $12.8 million (same as House bill)
- Emergencies, Hardships, Relocations, and Deficiencies - $4.16 million (same as House bill)
- Inholding, Donations, and Exchanges - $9.75 million (same as House bill)
- Federal Land Acquisitions - $57.9 million (House bill has $63.3 million

Along with the amounts listed above, the bill includes a total of $3.463 billion in discretionary appropriations for the NPS in FY 2022, an increase of $341 million from FY 2021. (The House bill appropriates $3.469 billion.) This amount fully funds the budget request to hire more than 1,000 new employees across the NPS to replace the staff losses over the last several years. The Committee also recommends an unprecedented increase of $129,000,000 dedicated to conservation, which includes climate research and planning as well as on-the-ground natural resources projects to improve climate resilience, protect wildlife, restore habitat, and reduce the threat of wildfire.

The Senate bill allocates funding as follows:

- Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) - $2.930 billion, which is an increase of $241.7 million above FY 21 (The House bill appropriates $2.965 billion.) The Senate amount includes an additional $15 million to advance social justice and to tell the stories of underserved communities; $20 million for the new Civilian Climate Corps; and an additional $122 million within the various resource stewardship programs.
- National Recreation and Preservation (NR&P) - $85.1 million, an increase of $11 million above FY 21 (The House bill appropriates $80.4 million.) Included in this amount is $27.1 million for national heritage areas.
- Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) - $180 million, which is an increase of $35.7 million above the FY 21 level (The House bill appropriates $155.8 million.) Included in this amount is $10 million for Historically Black Colleges and Universities; $21.7 million for African American Civil Rights Grants; $26 million for Save America's Treasures Grants; $10 million for grants related to the 250th anniversary of the country's founding; and $15.7 million in congressionally directed spending for projects on the National Register of Historic Places, or a National Historic Landmark related to African American civil rights.
- Construction - $253 million, which is an increase of $29.2 million above the FY 21 level (The House bill appropriates $252.6 million.)
- Centennial Challenge - $15 million, which is the same as FY 2021 (The House bill appropriates $15 million.)

In addition to the funding shown above, the Senate bill includes these additional authorizations:

- Sec. 116 extends the authority for one year of the Delaware Water Gap NRA to charge fees for commercial vehicles to use Route 209.
- Sec. 117 extends the authorization of appropriations, or raises the ceiling on these authorizations for several national heritage areas whose authority expires at the end of FY 2021.
- Sec. 118 authorizes a study of the 1965 Voting Rights March as a possible addition to the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail, as well as possibly making this trail a unit of the National Park System.
- Sec. 120 provides funding transfer authority between the Departments of the Interior and Homeland Security for border mitigation activities.
- Sec. 422 provides an extension through October 1, 2023, of the authority to collect fees under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act.

- Sec. 429 provides certain limitations on oil and gas development near Chaco Culture National Historical Park.

The committee report notes the extensive ecological and cultural resource damage done along the southern border due to construction of the border wall on 625 acres of federal land because no environmental reviews, historical or cultural clearances, or tribal consultations were done. As a result, the committee directs the land management agencies to do and provides funds for remediation and mitigation work and includes a provision to allow the Secretary of the Interior to accept funds from the Department of Homeland Security to do this work.

The committee report directs the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service to annually make available on the agencies' websites, a list of the projects and activities funded with receipts from the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA).

The committee report noted the repeal of the policy by the previous administration that allowed parks to voluntarily establish disposable plastic water bottle sales elimination programs that aimed to reduce the disposal of plastic water bottles in national parks. The committee urges the NPS to reinstate the policy and to urge park units, where feasible, to mitigate or prevent plastic pollution in the National Park System through visitor education, recycling stations and waste management options.

October 19 – The *Committee on Energy and Natural Resources:* Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining concluded a hearing to examine, among other bills:

S. 1459, to provide for the protection of and investment in certain Federal land in the State of California, which includes the following affecting the NPS:
Title I – Redwood National and State Parks, California:

- Section 112, authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to undertake initiatives to restore degraded redwood forest ecosystems in Redwood National and State Parks in partnership with the State of California, local agencies, and nongovernmental organizations;
- Section 115, authorizes the establishment of a visitor center in Del Norte County, California, to assist in fulfilling the purposes of Redwood National and State Parks and the Smith River National Recreation Area;
- Section 117, requires the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to evaluate the feasibility and suitability of establishing overnight accommodations on Federal land at the southern and northern boundaries or on land within 20 miles of the southern and northern boundaries of Redwood National and State parks in consultation with interested Federal, State, Tribal, and local entities, and private and nonprofit organizations;
- Section 133, designates, among other areas, approximately 31,000 acres in Redwood National Park as potential wilderness.
- Section 134, designates, among other river segments, three segments of rivers in Redwood National Park as part of the wild and scenic rivers system;

Title III - establishes the San Gabriel National Recreation Area in the State of California as a unit of the National Park System, and
S. 2433, to require the Secretary of the Interior to develop and maintain a cadastre (inventory) of Federal real property, after receiving testimony from Senators Whitehouse and Padilla; Steve Feldgus, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Lands and Mineral Management; and Christopher B. French, Deputy Chief, National Forest System, Department of Agriculture.

October 21 – The *Committee on Energy and Natural Resources:* concluded a hearing to examine, among other bills,

- S. 1734, to direct the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to encourage and expand the use of prescribed fire on land managed by the Department of the Interior or the Forest Service, with an emphasis on units of the National Forest System in the western United States,
- S. 2404, to improve Federal activities relating to wildfires,
- S. 2436, to amend the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 to establish emergency fireshed management areas,
- S. 2650, to provide mandatory funding for hazardous fuels reduction projects on certain Federal land, and
- S. 2836, to improve revegetation and carbon sequestration activities in the United States,

after receiving testimony from Senator Bennet; Christopher B. French, Deputy Chief, National Forest System, Forest Service, Department of Agriculture; Jeffery Rupert, Director, Office of Wildland Fire, Department of the Interior; Bill Crapser, Wyoming State Forestry Division, Cheyenne, on behalf of the National Association of State Foresters; Paul Johansen, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, South Charleston; and Tyson Bertone-Riggs, Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition, Portland, Oregon.

October 28 – The Senate passed H.R. 5763, to provide an extension of Federal-aid highway, highway safety, and transit programs. The bill includes a short-term extension through December 3, 2021, for the surface transportation programs of the federal government, including those that benefit the national park roads system. The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law.

House Actions

Update: September 23 – The House passed H.R. 4350, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2022 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, by a yea-and-nay vote of 316 yeas to 113 nays. The final text of H.R. 4350, as passed by the House, was unavailable as of the time this was previously reported. Below are the provisions that affect the NPS:

Division A, Title VI:

Section 644 authorizes Gold Star families and veterans to receive a lifetime pass under the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act.

Division A, Title X:

Section 1092 states it is the sense of Congress that due to racial bias in the prosecution and convictions of the Port Chicago 50 sailors during World War II, the Secretary of the Navy should upgrade the general and summary discharges of these sailors to honorable discharges.

Division E, Title LV:

Section 5502 - designates a small amount of wilderness in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park in Colorado.

Sections 5512 - 5534 - Redwood National and State Parks, California:

- Section 5512, authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to undertake initiatives to restore degraded redwood forest ecosystems in Redwood National and State Parks in partnership with the State of California, local agencies, and nongovernmental organizations.
- Section 5515, authorizes the establishment of a visitor center in Del Norte County, California, to assist in fulfilling the purposes of Redwood National and State Parks and the Smith River National Recreation Area.
- Section 5517, requires the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to evaluate the feasibility and suitability of establishing overnight accommodations on Federal land at the southern and northern boundaries or on land within 20 miles of the southern and northern boundaries of Redwood National and State parks in consultation with interested Federal, State, Tribal, and local entities, and private and nonprofit organizations.
- Section 5533, designates, among other areas, approximately 31,000 acres in Redwood National Park as potential wilderness.
- Section 5534, designates, among other river segments, three segments of rivers in Redwood National Park as part of the wild and scenic rivers system.

Sections 5552 - designates certain rivers within Olympic National Park, Washington, as wild and scenic rivers.

Sections 5581-89 - establishes the San Gabriel National Recreation Area in the State of California as a unit of the National Park System.

Section 5597 - adjusts the boundary of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, in California, to include the Rim of the Valley Corridor of 191,000 acres.

Section 5619 - removes a 15.5-acre parcel of land from potential wilderness within Rocky Mountain National Park.

Sections 5651-55 - establishes in statute the Curecanti National Recreation Area in Colorado. Curecanti NRA is one of just a couple of National Park System units that have never been legislatively established by Congress. Currently, the NRA is managed under a cooperative agreement between the NPS and the Bureau of Reclamation.

Section 5597 – authorizes the withdrawal of just over 1 million acres surrounding Grand Canyon National Park from mineral entry, leasing, and patent under the mining laws of the U.S.

Section 5702 – authorizes the Secretary of Commerce, under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, to designate areas of importance for marine mammals known to experience vessel strikes and establish mandatory vessel speed restrictions to reduce such strikes. The secretary may consider national parks for these restrictions, among other areas.

Division E, Title LXIV:

Section 6442 – requires the Global War on Terrorism Memorial Foundation to establish a Global War on Terrorism Memorial on one of three specified sites within the Reserve on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Over three decades ago, the Reserve was designated by Congress to be a completed work of civic art where no new memorials would be authorized but Congress continues to make exceptions for new memorials, including this one. It is unclear how Congress can force a private entity to create such a memorial, especially if the foundation is unable to raise the funds as required under the Commemorative Works Act.

Section 6459 – requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in conjunction with the Secretaries of the four land management agencies, to establish a two-year pilot program to employ veterans transitioning from the Armed Services in positions that relate to land management and conservation in the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture.

Section 6478 – requires the establishment of a housing allowance for federal wildland firefighters whose primary residence is more than 50 miles from their hiring location.

Section 6479 – requires the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to establish a program of mental health awareness and support for federal wildland firefighters.

Section 6489 – requires the Secretary of Defense to authorize the inclusion on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., of the names of the 74 crew members of the U.S.S. Frank E. Evans killed on June 3, 1969.

October 19 – The House passed H.R. 1029, to waive the application fee for any special use permit for veterans' special events at war memorials on land administered by the National Park Service in the District of Columbia and its environs, by a vote of 421 yeas to 3 nays.

October 27 – The *Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands* held a hearing entitled "Wildland Firefighting Workforce Reforms". Testimony was heard from Jaelith Hall-Rivera, Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry, U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture; Jeff Rupert, Director, Office of Wildland Fire, Department of the Interior; and public witnesses.

October 28 – The House passed H.R. 5763, to provide an extension of Federal-aid highway, highway safety, and transit programs, by a vote of 358 yeas to 59 nays. The bill includes a short-term extension through December 3, 2021, for the surface transportation programs of the federal government, including those that benefit the national park roads system.

October 28 – The *Committee on Oversight and Reform* held a hearing entitled "Fueling the Climate Crisis: Exposing Big Oil's Disinformation Campaign To Prevent Climate Action'". Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

October 28 – *The Select Committee on the Climate Crisis* held a hearing entitled "International Climate Challenges and Opportunities". Testimony was heard from 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.

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area
Vehicles dumped illegally

On August 26, park staff discovered an abandoned vehicle, UTV, and boat in the Blue Hole section of the park, which is closed to all vehicles. They appeared to have been dumped on separate occasions. Park staff was able to remove the vehicles, and the incidents remain under investigation. Source: Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area

Buck Island Reef National Monument
Visitor pleads guilty to resisting arrest

On January 10, shots were fired in the park after a fight occurred on the beach. Shortly thereafter, a man fled the scene in his boat at a high rate of speed while carrying several passengers. He disobeyed multiple orders directing him to stop. The NPS was forced to abandon the pursuit when the suspect went into shallow channels, and the Coast Guard was able to assist and take the suspect into custody two hours later. On October 19, the defendant pleaded guilty to resisting or impeding an officer of the United States. He faces up to one year in prison and is expected to be sentenced in February. Source: *The St. Thomas Source*

Cape Hatteras National Seashore
Abandoned shipwreck to be removed

On October 25, a contractor, Cape Dredging, Inc., began removing a 72-foot scallop boat that ran aground in March 2020 just south of the Oregon Inlet Campground. The NPS made attempts to have the owner claim and remove the vessel, but it was abandoned. Since the incident, the shipwreck has been half-buried by sand. The removal project is expected to cost $295,000 and take roughly a month to complete. The NPS is continuing to attempt to recover the cost from the registered owner, but decided it was prudent to remove the vessel before it becomes prohibitively more expensive and to minimize ecological effects. Source: *Daily Press*, *Island Free Press*

George Washington Memorial Parkway

Judge dismisses criminal charges against U.S. Park Police

On October 22, a federal judge dismissed all criminal charges against two U.S. Park Police officers who fatally shot unarmed motorist Bijan Ghaisar, 25, in 2017. They ruled that the officers had reasonable fear of danger and the actions were "necessary and proper." The Virginia Attorney General's Office and Fairfax County commonwealth's attorney said they would appeal the ruling. Source: *Washington Post*

Grand Canyon National Park
Visitor observed hitting baseball into canyon

On October 17, a visitor was observed hitting a baseball with a bat into the canyon near the Yavapai Geology Museum on the South Rim. The incident was reported by visitors, including photographic evidence, and the NPS has stated that it is in contact with the visitor. Source: *Fox 7 Austin*

Grand Teton National Park
Body found after 4 day search

On October 21, park law enforcement received a call expressing concern about a visitor's welfare after an interaction with him outside the park's eastern boundary. His vehicle was located unattended at Game Warden Point parking area. A search was initiated by the NPS, Civil Air Patrol, and Wyoming Highway Patrol, and the victim's body was found on October 24 near Uhl Hill. The incident is under investigation. Source: *CBS News*

Grand Teton National Park
"Highly food-conditioned" bear euthanized

On October 16, NPS staff, in coordination with USFWS and Wyoming Game and Fish Department, put down a 4-year-old female grizzly bear that was known to be "highly food-conditioned" and exhibiting "increasingly bold behavior" toward humans over two years. Source: *Jackson Hole News and Guide*

Grand Teton National Park
10 animals killed by vehicles in two weeks

The park is asking visitors to slow down and pay attention, as drivers have killed five bison, one elk, one mule deer, one pronghorn, one coyote, and one wolf pup in the last two weeks. Source: *East Idaho News*

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park
3 nene killed by a cars in two weeks

On October 21, a male nene (Hawaiian goose) was struck by a car on Chain of Crater Road near the Mau Loa o Maunaulu trailhead. It was the third nene killed on the road in two weeks; the second was the female mate of the third. The nene is Hawai'i's official state bird and is the rarest goose in the world. Once on the brink of extinction, the nene have blossomed to 3,500 individuals state-wide. Source: *The Honolulu Star-Advertiser*

Olympic National Park
Day hiker missing

A 78-year-old visitor was reported as missing on October 23. He had last been seen on October 19 and friends reported that he intended to do an off-trail day hike on October 20 between the Graves Creek Campground and Graves Creek corral. His vehicle was found parked at the Graves Creek Campground. The hiker is said to be experienced with off-trail travel and familiar with the area. Teams from the NPS and local agencies have engaged in over 2,000 hours of searching. A relatively recently-opened sardine can had been found in the area on October 31, but no other clues have been found, and the search was scaled back to "limited continuous mode" on November 1. The NPS is asking the public for any information they might have. Source: *KING*, *Peninsula Daily News*

Rainbow Bridge National Monument
Dock access closed due to low lake levels

On October 21, the NPS announced that, due to record-low water levels on Lake Powell, there will no longer be dock access to the shoreline near Rainbow Bridge. Boats and small vessels can still access the shoreline, but access is difficult due to mud and debris. Source: *Lake Powell Life*

Zion National Park, Grand Canyon National Park
100-mile high speed chase ends in arrest

On October 16, a vehicle was observed speeding through the eastern end of Zion National Park. Rangers tried to stop the vehicle, but it was able to leave the park headed east. Kane County Sherriff's deputies approached the car going west, but they were forced off the road when the vehicle swerved into their lane. Spikes were also laid on the roadway, but the suspect was able to avoid them. The suspect was observed by deputies driving in excess of 105mph and driving erratically. The suspect crossed into Arizona, and was eventually stopped by spikes laid out by an NPS ranger at Lee's Ferry, 100 miles from where the chase began. The suspect was taken into custody. Felony charges in both Utah and Arizona are expected to follow after the investigation is complete. Source: *ABC4*

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - The body found on October 9 near Yadkin Valley Overlook has been identified as a 33-year-old from Rhode Island. The incident is being

- investigated as a homicide by the NPS Investigative Services Branch, FBI, North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation and Watauga County Sheriff's Office. Source: *Blowing Rocket*

- *Grand Teton National Park* - The remains of Brian Laundrie were found on October 20 in Myakkahatachee Creek Environmental Park in Florida. Laundrie was the only person of interest and chief suspect in the murder of his fiancée Gabby Petito, who was last heard from by her family while visiting Grand Teton and later found dead by strangulation in the nearby Bridger-Teton National Forest. Laundrie's remains had been submerged underwater for a period of time and were identified by dental records. An initial autopsy was inconclusive as to cause of death, and the investigation is ongoing. The investigation of Petito's death is also ongoing. Source: *CNN*, *NBC New York*

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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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