View this email in your web browser.

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

# The Coalition Report
## Wednesday, September 22, 2021

---

*Please note: Our editor is taking some time away from the desk this week to enjoy public lands, so this news report covers September 8-17, and our next edition will cover September 18-October 6. Thanks for your understanding.*

## Coalition Actions

Coalition Chair Phil Francis spoke with *E & E News* on the idea that we should create more national parks to deal with the record number of visitors, saying, "with the numbers we're seeing and the interest that seems to be occurring, to me, you know, we probably need more parks — and we need more funding." https://protectnps.org/2021/09/08/coalition-speaks-on-need-for-more-parks-and-more-funding/

Phil also spoke with *National Parks Traveler* about air tour management plans (ATMPs) at parks across the system. "What each park that is drafting an air tour management plan needs to do is carefully examine impacts the flights bring to the parks," he said. The Coalition has already commented on several ATMPs. https://protectnps.org/2021/09/07/coalition-speaks-with-npt-about-air-tour-management-plans/

## 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.*

- September 25 is National Public Lands Day. Many parks will host volunteer stewardship efforts.
- This month is also Hispanic Heritage Month. Many parks are hosting related events. Here is an NPS release about 10 ways to celebrate.
- *NPS announces $15.5 million in Save America's Treasures Grants* - In partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute for Museum and Library Services, the NPS awarded grants to fund 49 projects in 29 states to preserve and rehabilitate significant and iconic American structures and collections. Source: National Park Service
- *NPS announces Concessioner Zero Waste Planning Tool* - An interactive and user-friendly tool has been developed to provide concessioners, particularly Category I and II contracts, with qualitative and quantitative assessments of current waste managed within their operations, along with best practices in minimizing waste. Source: National Park Service
- *"More national parks won't solve overcrowding"* - *The Land Desk* ran an essay by Jonathan P. Thompson that counters the recent *New York Times* opinion piece by Kyle Paoletta that argues for more parks. In contrast, Thompson argues that popular parks will always be popular and that funding should be increased to mitigate damage and control crowding. Source: *The Land Desk* (republished in *High Country News*)
- *Is overcrowding ruining the parks? - The Guardian* ran an article that interviews visitors, tour guides, and service workers in the parks about how record-high tourism is affecting popular national parks. Source: *The Guardian*
- *"Don't let hunters kill bison inside a national park" - The New York Times* ran an op-ed by Matthew Scully, a former senior speechwriter for President George W. Bush and animal rights advocate, arguing that the Grand Canyon's plan to kill bison through hunting is unethical and unnecessary. Source: *The New York Times*

## Around the Parks

*Park reports are in alphabetical order.*

- *Acadia National Park* - House Representatives from the Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition from four states spent three days with park scientists learning about climate change effects on the park. Source: *News Center Maine*
- *Badlands National Park* - The park will build a new visitor center in the southeast section of the park near Cedar Pass. Major donors for the project include the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, Badlands Natural History

Association, and Badlands National Park Conservancy. Source: *Rapid City Journal*

- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - 3 nests of Kem's Ridley sea turtles, the rarest species of sea turtle on Earth, were laid at the park this season. Source: *WTKR*

- *Denali National Park and Preserve* - The park kennels have announced the return of the popular "Puppy Cam", which went offline in 2020. There are 8 burgeoning sled dogs, Apollo, Blitz, Merlyn, Jolie, Boomer, Sage, Dargo, and Gus, to follow as they grow and learn to become sled dogs for the park. Source: Denali National Park and Preserve

- *Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve* - The NPS will cancel the current solicitation for an agricultural lease. Although they received proposals, they were unable to successfully agree to lease terms. The current lease has been extended one year and will now expire on November 30, 2022. Source: Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve

- *Fort Monroe National Monument* - Two senators and a congresswoman from Virginia are asking the Department of Interior to accept a donation from the state to the NPS of about 40 acres of land on Fort Monroe to unify two divided sections of the park and achieve an unbroken coastline along the Chesapeake Bay. The state attempted to donated the land to the NPS during the Trump administration, which did not accept the donation. Source: *WAVY*

- *Fort Raleigh National Historic Site* - From September 15-24, a group of archaeologists from the NPS and First Colony Foundation will search for evidence of Sir Walter Raleigh's "Lost Colony" that went missing 400 years ago. The dig will include ground-penetrating radar and surveys of areas that have not been reviewed previously. Source: Fort Raleigh National Historic Site

- *Glacier National Park* - The three-month trial reservation system for Going-to-the-Sun Road ended on September 6. Park officials said that it worked as intended, alleviating traffic congestion inside the park. Visitors and local businesses had mixed reviews. Data from the pilot program was released on September 16. Since the pilot program ended, congestion has caused the West Entrance to close three times. Source: *Great Falls Tribune*

- *Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site* - The park will commemorate the 64th anniversary of Central High's desegregation by the Little Rock Nine with virtual programs on September 24 and 25. The program will utilize the theme "The Struggle for Equity and Equality," and will include conversations with Phoebe Ferguson and Keith Plessy, descendants from the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case that established "separate but equal" provisions that sanctified segregation. Source: Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site

- *Mammoth Cave National Park* - Recent work by the Cave Research Foundation has mapped 8 more miles of cave, bringing the cave to 420 miles. It is the world's longest cave, and it is expected that more mapping will "lengthen" the cave. Source: *National Parks Traveler*

- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - The park issued its record of decision for its General Management Plan Amendment and EIS addressing agricultural leases and tule elk management. Modifications were made to the preferred alternative after the release of the Final EIS, including "more robust requirements for ranch operations, further restrictions on ranch operations diversification, and improvements to the management of free-ranging elk." Source: Point Reyes National Park

- *Zion National Park* - The Utah Department of Transportation approved a $10.8 million grant to pave a trail connecting the community of La Verkin to the park. Construction will begin in 2023 and is expected to take 5-6 years. It will include parking lots, bathrooms, benches, kiosks, and interpretive signs. Source: *Backpacker*

## Personnel Changes

- *St. Croix parks (Christiansted National Historic Site, Buck Island Reef National Monument, Salt River Bay National Historical Park and Ecological Preserve)* - Angelita "Angie" Alvino was selected as the new superintendent. She has over 20 years of experience with the National Park Service, most recently as Assateague Island's chief of administration and business services and acting superintendent for Salem Maritime and Saugus Iron Works National Historic Sites. She will begin her new role on October 4. Source: Christiansted National Historic Site

- *Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park, Waco Mammoth National Monument* - Justin Bates was selected as the new superintendent. He was most recently deputy superintendent at the same park(s) and also has experience doing planning in local government and with the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. He started his new role on August 15. Source: *Daily Trib*

## Park People

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

### In the News

- John Reynolds was awarded the Cornelius Amory Pugsley medal by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration. This award was first bestowed on Stephen Mather, the first director of the National Park Service, and is meant to honor those that have significantly enriched the lives of people through their public service in parks. John worked for the NPS for 40 years, with his last position as regional director of the Pacific West Region. Source: American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration

- *"Kids Speak for Parks" leader received Murie Spirit of Conservation Rising Leader award* - Robbie Bond, a 13-year-old climate activist and the founder of Kids Speak for Parks has been chosen by the Teton Science Schools for this annual award. Rose Marcario, former CEO of Patagonia, has received the Murie Spirit of Conservation Award. Source: *Jackson Hole News and Guide*

## Open for Comment

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

- Many parks currently have open public comment on draft Air Tour Management Plans to comply with the National Parks Air Tour Management Act of 2000. Comments for the below plans are due October 3.
  - Arches National Park
  - Bandelier National Monument
  - Bryce Canyon National Park
  - Canyonlands National Park
  - Glacier National Park
  - Great Smoky Mountains National Park
  - Natural Bridges National Monument

- *Arches National Park* - Public comment is now open on a Visitor Use, Access, and Experience plan. Comments are open until October 5. Source: *The Spectrum*

- *Biscayne National Park* - Public comment is now open on increases to campground fees. Comments are open until October 7. Source: Biscayne National Park

- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - Public comment is now open on a plan to repair the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse and surrounding landscape. Comments are open until October 17. Source: Cape Hatteras National Seashore

- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - Public comment is now open on a plan to increase or add fees for camping, parking, and evening lighthouse tours. Comments may be submitted by email or phone. Source: *NBC Bay Area*

- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - Public comment is now open on the Gatlinburg Spur Safety Improvements Project, which seeks to improve safety and traffic flow along the Spur while retaining the parkway character of the road. Comments are open until September 26. Source: *Cherokee One Feather*

- *Indiana Dunes National Park* - Public comment is now open on charging entrance fees, as well as six new backcountry campsites and a group campsite. Comments are open until October 1. Source: *CBS Chicago*

- *New River Gorge National Park and Preserve* - Public comment is now open on a plan to decommission a damn and pond on Pike Drive to reclaim the area as a wetland and wildlife habitat. The dam does not conform to modern standards, is potentially hazardous to human safety, is costly to repair, and is considered of low value to visitors. Comments are open until September 23. Source: New River Gorge National Park and Preserve

- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - Public comment is now open on a proposal to increase campground fees. Each of the types of sites (standard tent sites, small group sites, and large group sites) will double in cost. Comments are open until October 1. Source: Point Reyes National Seashore

- *San Juan Island National Historical Park* - Public comment is now open on a draft Accessibility Self Evaluation and Transition Plan. Comments are open until September 30. Source: *The Islands' Sounder*

- *Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve* - The Wrangell-St. Elias Subsistence Resource Commission will meet by teleconference on October 5 and 6 to consider a range of issues related to subsistence hunting and fishing in the park. The meeting is open to the public and public testimony opportunities are provided. Comments may also be emailed. Source: Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve

- *Environmental Protection Agency* - Public comment is now open for a proposed rule to revise existing greenhouse gas emissions standards for passenger cars and light trucks. Comments are open until September 27. Source: National Parks Conservation Association

## Other Department of Interior News

- *DOI strengthens wildland fire management collaboration with Intertribal Timber Council* - On September 15, the DOI announced a signing of an MOU with the ITC to better collaborate on wildland fire management across departmental and Tribal lands. The MOU will allow for better information sharing, coordination of workforce development, and sharing priorities to combat the effects of climate change. Source: Department of Interior

- *DOI considers re-listing gray wolves as Endangered Species* - The US Fish & Wildlife Service announced that it will take a 12-month review of the status of gray wolves due to "potential increases in human-caused mortality." Recent bills in Montana and Idaho have loosened regulations around wolf killing. Source: *KPVI*

- *DOI announces consultations to establish and consolidate tribal homelands* - The Department of Interior has invited Tribes to consultations that will focus on the land-into-trust process, leasing and rights of way, and sacred sites and treaty rights to help restore homelands of Tribes. Source: Department of Interior

## Congressional Actions

Congressional actions of interest to the National Park Service from September 3 - 17, 2021.

New Public Laws

Nothing to report.

Senate Actions

**September 13** – The nomination of Charles F. Sams III, of Oregon, to be Director of the National Park Service was transmitted to the Senate.

House Actions

**September 9** – *Committee on Natural Resources:* Full Committee held a markup on the committee print containing legislative proposals to comply with the reconciliation directive included in section 2002 of the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2022, S. Con. Res. 14, which was order reported, as amended.

Among other pieces of the measure, the Committee voted to invest:

- $9.5 billion for coastal and Great Lakes restoration and climate resiliency projects.
- $3 billion to support the Civilian Climate Corps through the Department of the Interior, which includes $1.7 billion through FY 2031 for the National Park Service.
- $2.5 billion to clean up abandoned hardrock mines.
- $150 million for the Department of the Interior to conduct more effective and efficient reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act.
- $200 million for the Presidio Trust for projects within the Presidio portion of Golden Gate National Recreation Area.
- $100 million for the National Park Service's competitive grant program for urban areas.
- $100 million for the National Park Service's Every Kid Outdoors Program.
- $115 million for the National Park Service's climate reliance program.
- $75 million for the National Park Service's historic preservation program.

The Committee voted to raise public money through:

- Establishing a hardrock **mineral royalty**, which could raise around $2 billion over 10 years.
- Establishing a hardrock **mineral reclamation fee**, which could raise around $200 million over 10 years.
- Increasing the annual hardrock mining claim maintenance fee, which could raise nearly $800 million over 10 years.
- Directing the Department of the Interior (DOI) to hold offshore wind lease sales in federal waters around American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- Restoring DOI's authority to hold offshore wind lease sales in federal waters in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico and off the coasts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.
- Increasing outdated fossil fuel royalty rates and extending royalties to methane emissions.
- Ending noncompetitive leasing and charging annual fees for the extraction of fossil fuel public resources.
- Strengthening bonding standards and charging fees on offshore fossil fuel pipelines and idled oil and gas wells.
- Increasing civil and criminal penalties, ending so-called fossil fuel royalty relief and requiring companies to pay for annual inspection costs.

Further, the Committee voted to include:

- A provision that repeals the Oak Flat land swamp between the Resolution Copper mining venture and the federal government in the Tonto National Forest in Arizona. This land is considered sacred to the San Carlos Apache Tribe, who urged its protection through the National Register of Historic Places.
- The withdrawal from mining and other mineral activities of just over 1 million acres of BLM land adjacent to Grand Canyon National Park.
- A provision to prohibit new oil and gas development on land around Chaco Culture National Historical Park.

## 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.*

**Cape Hatteras National Seashore**
**SUV catches fire on beach**

On September 10, an SUV that was stuck in sand on an off-road vehicle beach caught on fire and burned significantly, resulting in a total loss. All passengers were able to escape. Park officials suggested that the fire may have been connected to improper tire pressure. Source: *The Herald*

**Curecanti National Recreation Area**
**Toxic algae found**

The park has found the presence of cyanotoxins in the Iola Basin section of Blue Mesa Reservoir in concentrations that exceed safe exposure levels. They have closed Iola Basin to full body contact. Fishing, boating, and other types of recreation are still allowed, with caution. Source: Curecanti National Recreation Area

**Glacier National Park**
**Concession employee sentenced for sexual assault**

In July 2020, a seasonal employee, working for a private company and living in park housing, sexually assaulted another seasonal employee who was intoxicated and passed out. The offender was tried in federal court and recently sentenced to five years in prison, followed by five years of supervised release. Source: *Hi-Line Today*

**Grand Canyon National Park**
**Missing backpacker found after 4-day search**

A 66-year-old had a backpacking permit to spend two nights on the Walhalla Plateau starting from the Komo Point Trailhead on the North Rim, starting on September 10 and returning on September 13. On September 14, the visitor was reported missing. Ground and aerial search teams worked for several days, eventually locating the hiker near Roosevelt Point. The patient was announced to be in stable condition, and was treated and transported to the North Rim. Source: Grand Canyon National Park

**Grand Teton National Park**
**National hunt for missing person last heard from in park**

On September 10, family of a 22-year-old reported her missing. Prior to her last communication, she was believed to have been in Grand Teton and headed toward Yellowstone. She had been traveling around the country with her fiancée since July 2. On August 12, the couple interacted with police in Moab, who responded to a domestic dispute between the two. The fiancée returned home to North Port, Florida alone on September 1 and is considered "a person of interest" by law enforcement. The family of the missing person has stated publicly that the fiancée refuses to answer their questions about the last place he saw her or other questions about her whereabouts. The primary investigating authority is North Port Police Department, and the investigation is being supported by the FBI, NPS, and other local law enforcement agencies. Source: *Buckrail*, *New York Times*, *The Kansas City Star*

**Great Smoky Mountains National Park**
**2016 Gatlinburg fire lawsuit on hold**

A lawsuit filed on behalf of survivors, insurance companies, and family of deceased victims over the NPS' handling of the 2016 Gatlinburg wildfires has been put on hold while a judge considers a request by federal lawyers to dismiss the case. A previous motion to dismiss the case was denied in December, but new arguments in August are currently be considered. 14 people perished and there was $2 billion in property damage resulting from the fires. Source: *WATE*

**New River Gorge National Park and Preserve**
**Climber falls 50 feet**

On September 12, a rock climber fell 50 feet near the Butcher Branch trail. Law enforcement rangers responded. The NPS did not release further details, only reminding the public to make sure they have the appropriate skills and gear to participate in outdoor activities. Source: *WOAY*

**Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore**
**2 kayakers go missing, 1 confirmed dead**

On September 16, two kayakers were reported as missing. The NPS, along with other federal and state agencies have responded, including use of a C130 and rescue helicopter. As of September 17, one fatality was confirmed and the search for the other missing person was ongoing. Source: Pictured Rocks National Seashore

**Point Reyes National Seashore**
**Human remains found**

On September 9, park authorities were informed that skeletal human remains were discovered in a remote part of the park, away from any trails. The remains appear to have been there for quite some time and no personal identification was located. An investigation is underway by the NPS and Marin County Sheriff's Department. Foul play is not suspected. Source: Point Reyes National Seashore

**Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area**
**Series of dog rescues and deaths**

The park put out a press release on September 9, asking visitors to think twice before hiking with animals. At least three dogs have died on local trails since July and the NPS and local SAR teams have participated in about half a dozen canine rescues, most suffering from heat illness. Source: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

**Sequoia National Park**
**Park closes due to wildfires**

On September 9, a lightning storm passed through the Sierra Nevada, starting 3 new fires in the park: Colony, Paradise, and Cabin. Cabin was largely contained within 3 days, but the other two have been combined into a single incident, the KNP Complex Fire. As of

September 17, the park and Three Rivers area was evacuated and the park was closed. Kings Canyon remained open. On that date, the fire was at 11,365 acres, 0% contained, with 482 personnel assigned. Source: *National Parks Traveler*, Inciweb

**Sitka National Historical Park**
**All trails close due to bear activity**

On September 13, the park closed all trails due to bear activity. They will reevaluate bear activity each day. Source: Sitka National Historical Park

**Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve**
**Hunter attacked by grizzly**

On September 8, a solo hunter was attacked by a grizzly bear near the Chisana River. He activated a distress signal, which triggered a rescue by the NPS and Air National Guard. He was taken to a nearby hospital, then transferred eventually to Providence Alaska Medical Center in Anchorage, where he was in stable condition. The grizzly was with two cubs, and because the attack was defensive in nature, the park has no plans to locate the mother bear. Source: *USA Today*

**Yellowstone National Park**
**Concession employee burned by Old Faithful**

On September 16, 19-year-old concession employee received treatment from rangers in the Old Faithful area for second- and third-degree burns on 5% of her body. As of September 17, no details about the circumstances of the incident have been released, but park officials reminded visitors to remain on boardwalks and trails and exercise extreme caution around thermal features. She was taken by ambulance to West Yellowstone and life-flighted to the Burn Center at East Idaho Regional Medical Center. Source: *KBZK*

**Yosemite National Park**
**Toxic algae in Tenaya Creek**

The park has warned that testing on Tenaya Creek yielded positive results for toxic algal blooms. Visitors have been warned to not enter or drink from Tenaya Creek and to report large algal blooms that are particularly bright, bubbly, strange-looking, or appear like haze in the water. Source: *Fresno Bee*

**Yosemite National Park**
**Solo hiker missing**

On September 6, a 31-year-old set out to hike for four days from Hetch Hetchy to Lake Eleanor and back. He is reported to have had a red inflatable kayak with him. After overdue for 2 days, he was declared missing. The park is seeking information from the public. Source: *Merced Sun-Star*

**Zion National Park**
**Person injured in rockfall**

On September 15, a rockfall happened in the Narrows just beyond the end of Riverside Walk. Many cobble-sized blocks tumbled into the river, one striking a visitor. Search and rescue was able to transport the patient to a local hospital, and her injuries were announced as "non-life threatening." Both Riverside Walk and the Narrows were closed temporarily and have since reopened. Source: *ABC4*, *Salt Lake Tribune*

## Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Gulf Islands National Seashore* - The park was able to reopen Opal Beach Complex (all but Clutser F) after its closure due to Hurricane Ida. Many areas remain closed for storm recovery, including the Fort Pickens area, Johnson Beach Road beyond the main parking lot, and Opal Beach Complex Cluster F. Source: Gulf Islands National Seashore

- *Lassen National Park* - The Dixie Fire is now California's largest wildfire in history. As of September 16, the fire was at 960,470 acres, 86% containment, and 2,270 personnel assigned. In the park, 72,737 acres have burned, which is 68% of the park. As of September 16, there has been no more damage to infrastructure in the park since the last Coalition Report. Source: Inciweb, Lassen National Park

## Acknowledgments

This newsletter is supported through Coalition staff and invaluable volunteers:

- Editor: Katie Wallace
- Tech and Production Support: Steve Pittleman, Emily Thompson
- Regular Correspondent: Don Hellman
- Issue Contributors: Bill Walters

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

* * * * *

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."

To receive a copy of this free publication, join or support the Coalition. Any current, retired, or former-salaried (GS, Wage System, Seasonal, Temporary, or SES) National Park

Service employee or volunteer who served under a signed volunteer agreement can join the Coalition. Coalition supporters who do not qualify under those criteria may also join and receive the newsletter.

--- ### ---

**Change Your Contact Info**

**Support the Coalition By Donating Today**

*Copyright © 2021 Coalition To Protect America's National Parks, All rights reserved.*

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can update your preferences or unsubscribe from this list.