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The Coalition Report

Wednesday, December 28, 2022

Editor Note: Happy holidays from all of us here at the Coalition!

Coalition Actions

The Coalition sent a [letter](#) to House and Senate leadership requesting the inclusion of the National Heritage Act in an end of year omnibus bill. [The act passed](#) on December 22. It not only establishes a unified NHA system under the National Park Service, but authorizes studies at three potential NHAs, increases funding for 11 NHAs, redesignates two NHAs, and designates seven new NHAs, including the Alabama Black Belt National Heritage Area (see more detail below in "Congressional Actions").

The Coalition also issued [a separate statement](#) on the Fiscal Year 2023 Omnibus funding bill.

In an [article](#) in *The Post and Courier*, Executive Council member Mike Allen discussed climate change and impacts on the Gullah Geechee Corridor.

Additionally, Mike was included in a *BBC* [article](#) on the International African American Museum in Charleston, South Carolina, and highlighted his work in establishing the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor.

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 and its programs, or intersecting with the parks on a more regional basis.

- *Timed entry returns* - Three parks have recently announced the return of timed entry programs in 2023: Arches, Glacier, and Rocky Mountain National Parks. Source: [National Parks Conservation Association](#)
- *Mississippi Civil Rights resource study* - On December 21, the NPS published the [Mississippi Civil Rights Sites Special Resource Study](#), which identifies nine sites in the state for potential inclusion in the National Park System. Source: [WJTV](#)
- *\$1.2 million in underrepresented community grants* - On December 19, the National Park Service announced \$1.2 million in Underrepresented Community Grants awarded for 21 projects in 16 states and the District of Columbia. The grants support diverse communities with untold stories in identifying, planning, and developing possible sites for the National Register of Historic Places. The program is funded by the Historic Preservation Fund, which draws on revenue from federal oil and gas leases. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Multiagency effort to protect Hawaiian birds* - On December 15, the Department of the Interior announced a multiagency strategy to address mosquito-borne avian malaria to prevent the extinction of rare Hawaiian forest birds. The NPS, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Native Hawaiian Relations, and Office of Policy Analysis are collaborating on solutions on a landscape level. Haleakalā National Park will be the first site to test out new mosquito control technology. The collaborative effort is funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Whitebark pine listed as threatened* - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has made [a determination](#) that whitebark pine is a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The ruling includes measures to provide for conservation of the species, though critical habitat designation will not be made at this time. About 10% of whitebark pines on public lands are in national park units. Source: [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)
- *Pop-up concerts by Yo-Yo Ma* - *The New York Times* published [an article](#) about impromptu concerts the cellist Yo-Yo Ma has been holding in national parks around the country, including New River Gorge, Grand Canyon, Acadia, and Great Smoky Mountains. His efforts have included collaborations with local artists. Source: *The New York Times*
- *"A national tantrum in a national park"* - *The Atlantic* published a personal essay with this title, about the intersection of customer service, expectations, societal norms, and national parks. Source: [The Atlantic](#)
- *"The cheapest and most expensive places to buy a home near a national park"* - *Outside* published [an article](#) with this title, citing New River Gorge Voyageurs, and Mammoth Cave as their top three cheapest and Grand Teton/Yellowstone,

Everglades, and Pinnacles as the three most expensive. The study utilized *Zillow.com* data, using average home prices for counties adjacent to national parks (in name, not all units of the NPS). Source: *Outside*

- "These should be national parks" - CNN published [an article](#) about various public lands that "should be" units of the NPS. Source: *CNN*

Around the Parks

Park reports are in alphabetical order.

- *Amache National Historic Site* - *Boise State Public Radio* ran [a segment](#) on Amache, including its history and the next steps in its development as a new unit of the National Park Service. Source: *Boise State Public Radio*
- *Appalachian National Scenic Trail* - A new phenology study from the trail shows that the transition from winter to spring, called "greening up," is happening 6-18 days earlier than in the past, particularly along the northern part of the trail. The research was collected as part of the Natural Resource Condition Assessment, a program of the NPS. Source: [Eos](#)
- *Assateague Island National Seashore* - Over Sand Vehicle permits will become available online on *recreation.gov* starting on January 4. They will also be available at the North Beach Ranger Station and Toms Cove Visitor Center. Source: [WBOC](#)
- *Big Bend National Park* - On December 19, the park announced that a 95-year-old rock wall at the former Hot Springs resort has been unburied by a series of high-water events over the summer. It had previously been buried by sediment. Source: [MySanAntonio.com](#)
- *Big Bend National Park* - The Big Bend Conservancy is close to finalizing a purchase from the Fulcher family of 3,815 acres west of the park near Terlingua, which will then be donated to the park. The parcel includes important watersheds, fossils, and a historic schoolhouse. This is the friends group's biggest project to date. Source: [Texas Public Radio](#)
- *Biscayne National Park* - *National Parks Traveler* published [an article](#) about large fishkills that have become more common in the past several years, probably due to poor water quality and high algal blooms. Source: *National Parks Traveler*
- *Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Curecanti National Recreation Area* - The park has signed a Finding of No Significant Impact for its wilderness and backcountry management plan. The park will also be moving wilderness use permits for Red Rock Canyon to *recreation.gov* starting in late Winter 2023. Source: [The Daily Sentinel](#), [Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park](#)

- *Bryce Canyon National Park* - *St. George News* published [an article](#) that the park is seeing "weird waves of visitation" in the aftermath of the height of the pandemic, including spikes of visitation on months that would typically be part of the shoulder season. Source: *St. George News*
- *Cape Lookout National Seashore* - *ABC 11* published [an article](#) about a shipwreck on South Core Banks that has garnered high social media attention due to its mysterious origins. Source: *ABC 11*
- *Crater Lake National Park, Lassen Volcanic National Park, Lava Beds National Monument, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area* - The parks announced that they will sell passes that allow joint access into all four parks, starting on January 1. Source: [KDRV](#)
- *Death Valley National Park* - Oregon State University, in collaboration with the park and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, captured 60 bighorn sheep to do health surveys, genetic studies, and fit each individual with a GPS tracking collar to monitor their movement. The individuals were captured via helicopter and brought to level ground for biologists to conduct the study before being released. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)
- *Fort Monroe National Monument* - Internal park communications obtained through the Freedom of Information Act show that park staff determined they would discontinue lease negotiations with the Paradise Ocean Club in June and July 2022. The club owner was not notified until September 1 and felt "blindsided" by the decision, with 30 days to vacate the premises. The communications stated that the park found that "nuisance behavior" associated with the club was "inconsistent with the park setting." Source: [WAVY](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - *Grist* published [an article](#) about the Grand Canyon Protection Act, a bill in the Senate that would make a current 20-year moratorium on new uranium mines on lands near the park permanent. The Senate has until January 3 to vote on the act, which has been passed twice by the House of Representatives. After that deadline, the act might have difficulty being reintroduced to the Senate agenda in the coming year. Source: *Grist*
- *Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument* - The park's film, "A Window Into the Past," won first place in the video category of the 2022 National Association for Interpretation Interpretive Media Awards, announced on December 15 in an online award ceremony. The film was made in collaboration between the park, Harpers Ferry Center for Media Services, and Orange Frame Productions of Richmond, Virginia. The film is currently available [online](#) and will show regularly when the permanent exhibits are complete at Thousand Springs Visitor Center. Source: [Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument](#)

- *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - The U.S. Geological Survey posted [a summary](#) of the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory's response to the recent eruption of Mauna Loa, including ongoing monitoring and fieldwork, community outreach, and interagency cooperation. Source: U.S. Geological Survey
- *Hovenweep National Monument, Natural Bridges National Monument* - The two parks will raise campground fees starting on January 1. Source: [Natural Bridges National Monument](#)
- *Indian Dunes National Park* - The park announced that it is soliciting proposals for Commercial Use Authorizations for various recreational activities and food trucks. Applications will be accepted now throughout the operating year (2023). Source: [nwi.com](#), [Indiana Dunes National Park](#)
- *Isle Royale National Park* - The park announced that it will increase passenger and freight fares, starting January 3. Source: [m Live](#)
- *Joshua Tree National Park* - *Alta* published [an article](#) about the challenges to managing the park's high visitation while following a day-in-the-life of Superintendent David Smith. Source: *Alta*
- *Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens* - The park released a Record of Decision for the environmental cleanup for the landfill site. Source: [The DC Line](#)
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - The *Los Angeles Times* published [an article](#) about the possible scenario of Lake Mead reaching "dead pool" levels by 2025, in which no water would flow below Hoover Dam. Source: *Los Angeles Times*
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - On December 16, several dozen trailers with boats drove Tropicana Avenue and the Strip in Las Vegas in protest of the possibility of boat ramp closures on Lake Mead, which is currently open for public comment (see "Open for Comment" below). They stated that they wanted to raise awareness about the issue and encourage people to give their opinions. Source: [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#)
- *Lassen Volcanic National Park* - The park will move the backcountry permit system online to [recreation.gov](#) starting on January 17. Source: [Lassen Volcanic National Park](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - The NPS has notified unsheltered occupants in McPherson Square that the park will be cleared in April. The NPS also removed an encampment from Fort Reno Park in mid-December. The NPS has a stated goal of removing encampments from all national park lands in Washington, D.C. by the end of 2023. The plan includes working with the city's social services to provide temporary and long-term housing, as well as mental health and drug addiction care.

Source: [Fox News](#)

- *North Cascades National Park* - Chelan County, Washington's Board of Commissioners submitted comments to the NPS and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, asking them to immediately suspend current efforts to reintroduce grizzlies to the North Cascades range. They stated that they oppose it "given the likely negative impacts to public safety, economic development, recreation opportunities and the overall livelihood of [their] rural communities." Source: [Lake Chelan Now](#)
- *Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument* - The Alamo Canyon Campground will now be available for reservations year-round on [recreation.gov](#). Previously, the small campground was first-come, first-served. Source: [Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument](#)
- *Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore* - On December 21, the park issued a prospectus for a concession contract to provide interpretive boat tours and associated services. Applications are due by February 21. Source: [Radio Results Network](#)
- *Salem Maritime National Historic Site* - The park announced that a contract has been awarded for \$1 million to repair and preserve the Custom House and Bonded Warehouse. The project began in mid-December and is expected to be complete by Winter 2023. All exhibit and museum collection items in the Custom House were temporarily removed and placed in secure storage. Public access to the facilities will remain closed throughout the project. Source: [Salem Maritime National Historic Site](#)
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - Campground fee increases will take effect at the parks starting on January 1, with a second set of increases in 2024. The parks have also established booking windows for all campgrounds with a variety of lengths to accommodate long-term planning, as well as last-minute campers. Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#)
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Yosemite National Park* - The Giant Sequoia Lands Coalition, which includes the NPS, State of California, U.S. Forest Service, Tule River Indian Tribe of California, and the Save the Redwoods League, announced that they exceeded their first-year goals and doubled the number of acres targeted for restoration. They also planted more than 248,000 native conifer seedlings, including sequoias, in groves that have recently burned. [A complete report](#) on their work was also published. Source: [California Department of Parks and Recreation](#)
- *Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument* - The park has developed a travelling exhibit called "Apparitions of the Ice Age," which depicts prehistoric life at Tule Springs during the last Ice Age, as well as information on how scientific research

informs our understanding of changing climates. The exhibit opened at the Springs Preserve on November 25 and will run until April 2. Source: [Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument](#)

Personnel Changes

- *Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine, Hampton National Historic Site* - Robert J. Stewart has been selected as the new assistant superintendent. Robert has many years of NPS experience, most recently as the superintendent of Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument. Robert's first NPS job was as a park guide at Fort McHenry and Hampton. Source: [Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - The park has selected three new staff for the park's management team. Barbara Hatcher is the new chief of facility management. Barbara previously served as a Supervisory Project Manager and engineer in Great Smoky Mountains. Jamie Cupples is the new chief of administration and business services. Jamie was most recently the comptroller in Yosemite National Park. Emily Davis is the new public affairs specialist and spokesperson. Emily was most recently a public affairs specialist at the U.S. Forest Service's Eastern Regional Office in Wisconsin and has previous experience at Grand Canyon National Park. Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)

Park People

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

Deceased

- Donald Baur, 68, passed away on December 15. Donald was previously an attorney for the NPS in the Solicitor's Office of the Department of the Interior and later provided pro bono legal counsel to the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks for many years. Our tribute to Donald can be found [here](#). Source: [Dignity](#)
- Frederick "Fred" "Fritz" W. Ekdahl, 87, passed away on December 2. Fritz worked on the Isle Royale Queen passenger ferry between Copper Harbor and Isle Royale National Park. Source: [The Daily Mining Gazette](#)
- Leon Topham Guymon, 87, passed away on December 19. Leon worked at the Bryce Canyon Lodge as a young person. Source: [St. George News](#)
- Richard "Dick" F. Shattuck, 71, passed away on November 28. In his retirement, Dick volunteered at Saguaro National Park. Source: [Burlington Free Press](#)

Open for Comment

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

- *Acadia National Park* - Public comment is [open until December 29](#) on a proposal to increase the entrance fees at the park. Source: [Acadia National Park](#)
- *Big Bend National Park* - Public comment is [open until January 15](#) on a proposed special use permit from a commercial enterprise to build a communication tower in the Panther Junction area. Source: [Big Bend National Park](#)
- *Big Cypress National Preserve, Everglades National Park* - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District is hosting a virtual listening session for the Western Everglades Restoration Project on January 17. The meeting will focus on the Wingate Mill Stormwater Treatment Area. Source: [Big Cypress National Preserve](#)
- *Cumberland Island National Seashore* - Public comment has been [extended until December 30](#) on a visitor use management plan. Source: [Cumberland Island National Seashore](#)
- *George Washington Memorial Parkway* - Public comment is [open until January 4](#) on a plan to improve safety and conduct maintenance along the southern end of the parkway and the Mount Vernon Trail. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve* - Public comment is [open until December 30](#) on a draft marine management plan. Source: [KTOO](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - Public comment is [open until January 6](#) on the proposed Laurel Falls Trail Management Plan, including rehabilitation of the trail, construction of trailside rest areas, parking improvements, and a viewing platform at the falls. Source: [The Mountain Press](#)
- *Haleakalā National Park* - Public comment is [open until January 23](#) on a plan to suppress invasive mosquitos in order to reduce transmission of avian malaria to threatened and endangered birds. Source: [Hawaii News Now](#)
- *Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve* - Public comment is [open until December 31](#) on a proposed demolition and rebuilding of 29 structures and 2.63 miles of the Entergy Louisiana LLC Golden Meadow-Barataria electrical transmission line. Source: [Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve](#)
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - Public comment has been [extended until January 22](#) for management options on how to maintain launch ramp access to the lake and other visitor services amid record low lake levels that continue to drop. Source: [Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#), [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#)
- *Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve* - Public comment is [open until](#)

[January 16](#) on a fire management plan. Source: [Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve](#)

- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - Public comment is [open until February 1](#) on a Day Use Visitor Access Strategy. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - Public comment is [open until January 17](#) on a Visitor Experience and Access planning process. Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#)
- *Theodore Roosevelt National Park* - Public comment is [open until January 31](#) on a Livestock Plan. Source: [Theodore Roosevelt National Park](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - Public comment is [open until February 3](#) on a Visitor Access Management Plan. Source: [Sierra Sun Times](#)
- *Chesapeake National Recreation Area* (proposed) - A draft bill was introduced by Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and U.S. Representative John Sarbanes (D-MD) that would unite regional sites and partner parks into the Chesapeake National Recreation Area. The lawmakers have established a 90-day public comment period, [open until February 12](#), to help finalize the legislation. Source: [Bay Journal](#)

Other Department of the Interior News

- *\$228 million in wildfire mitigation* - On December 14, the Department of the Interior announced \$228 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding to support wildland fire management, including increasing firefighter pay levels and increasing the resilience of communities under threat of wildfire. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$85 million for drought resilience* - On December 22, the Department of the Interior announced \$84.7 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for 36 communities in 8 western states to respond to drought challenges, including groundwater storage, rainwater harvesting, aquifer recharge, water reuse, ion exchange treatment, and other strategies. Source: [Department of the 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.

Editor note: Due to extensive Congressional actions recently and the onset of the holidays, further details from the Congressional Record from the last two weeks will be reported in the January 11 Coalition Report. The Coalition is ever grateful to Don Hellmann for

stellar reporting.

New Public Laws

December 9 – The president signed into law H.R. 521, to permit federal employees with disabilities, including law enforcement officers, customs and border protection officers, firefighters, air traffic controllers, nuclear materials couriers, members of the Capitol Police, members of the Supreme Court Police, employees of the Central Intelligence Agency performing intelligence activities abroad or having specialized security requirements, and diplomatic security special agents of the Department of State to receive retirement benefits in the same manner as if they had not been disabled. (P.L. 117–225).

December 16 – The president signed into law H.R. 1437, making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2023. The bill extends federal funding for all federal agencies through December 23, 2022. (P.L. 117–229).

Senate Actions

December 13 – The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources concluded a hearing to examine the Department of the Interior's implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, after receiving testimony from Tommy Beaudreau, Deputy Secretary of the Interior.

December 15 – The Senate passed the following:

- H.R. 1437, making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2023, by a vote of 71 yeas to 19 nays. The bill extends funding for all federal agencies through December 23, 2022. The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law.
- H.R. 7776, to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2023 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, by a vote of 83 yeas to 11 nays. See the House action of December 8 on H.R. 7776 in the [December 14 Coalition Report](#) for the provisions that affect the National Park Service.

December 20 – The Senate passed S. 3519, to amend the National Trails System Act to designate the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail.

December 20 – The Senate passed S. 1942, to standardize the designation of National Heritage Areas. As passed by the Senate, the bill includes the following:

Sec. 2 – Establishes the National Heritage Area System consisting of already established national heritage areas, corridors, partnerships, and routes and those to be designated in

the future. It authorizes the National Park Service to undertake or review studies of potential new heritage areas through established criteria, to evaluate accomplishments of heritage areas, to enter into cooperative agreements to carry out the purposes of national heritage areas, and to provide oversight, as well as technical and financial assistance to heritage areas.

Sec. 3 – Authorizes studies of the following potential national heritage areas:

- Kaena Point, Oahu, HI
- Great Dismal Swamp, VA & NC
- Sites on the island of Guam

Sec. 4 – Designates the following new national heritage areas (NHA):

- Alabama Black Belt NHA, AL
- Bronzeville-Black Metropolis NHA, IL
- Downeast Maine NHA, ME
- Northern Neck NHA, VA
- St. Croix NHA, St. Croix, VI
- Southern Campaign of the Revolution National Heritage Corridor (NHC), NC & SC
- Southern Maryland NHA, MD

Sec. 5 – Extends the authority of the following national heritage areas to receive not more than \$1 million in federal funding in any fiscal year through September 30, 2037 and without regard to any previous spending ceiling:

- Illinois and Michigan Canal NHC
- John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley NHC
- Delaware and Lehigh NHC
- The Last Green Valley NHC
- National Coal Heritage Area
- Tennessee Civil War Heritage Area
- Augusta Canal NHC
- Rivers of Steel NHA
- Essex NHA
- South Carolina NHC
- The America's Agricultural Heritage Partnership
- Ohio & Erie NHC
- Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley NHA
- MotorCities NHA
- Lackawana Valley NHA
- Schuylkill River Valley NHA
- Wheeling NHA
- Yuma Crossing NHA

- Erie Canalway NHC
- Blue Ridge NHA
- National Aviation Heritage Area
- Oil Region NHA
- Northern Rio Grande NHA
- Atchafalaya NHA
- Arabia Mountain NHA
- Mormon Pioneer NHA
- Freedom's Frontier NHA
- Upper Housatonic Valley NHA
- Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership
- Great Basin National Heritage Route
- Gullah/Geechee NHC
- Crossroads of the American Revolution NHA
- Abraham Lincoln NHA
- Journey Through Hallowed Ground NHA
- Niagara Falls NHA
- Sangre de Cristo NHA
- Cache la Poudre River NHA
- South Park NHA
- Northern Plains NHA
- Baltimore NHA (the bill also modifies the boundary of the heritage area)
- Freedom's Way NHA
- Mississippi Hills NHA
- Mississippi Delta NHA
- Muscle Shoals NHA
- Kenai Mountains – Turnagain Arm NHA

Sec. 6 – Increases the authorization of appropriations for the following national heritage areas:

- Rivers of Steel NHA from \$20 to \$22 million
- Essex NHA from \$20 to \$22 million
- South Carolina NHC from \$17 to \$19 million
- The America's Agricultural Heritage Partnership from \$17 to \$19 million
- Ohio & Erie NHC from \$17 to \$19 million
- Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley NHA from \$15 to \$17 million
- MotorCities NHA from \$12 to \$14 million
- Wheeling NHA from \$15 to \$17 million
- The Last Green Valley NHC from \$17 to \$19 million
- Lackawana Valley NHA from \$12 to \$14 million
- Blue Ridge NHA from \$14 to \$16 million

Sec. 7 – Redesignates the following national heritage areas:

- The America's Agricultural Heritage Partnership as the Silos & Smokestacks NHA

- The Great Basin National Heritage Route as the Great Basin NHA

Sec. 8 – Extends the deadline to complete certain heritage area management plans by two years.

December 21 – The Senate passed H.R. 1154, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating certain land as the Great Dismal Swamp National Heritage Area. The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law.

December 22 – The Senate passed the following:

- S. 3873, to designate the outdoor amphitheater at the Blue Ridge Music Center in Galax, Virginia, as the "Rock Boucher Amphitheater."
- H.R. 4373, to provide further continuing appropriations for FY 2023. The bill previously concerned appropriations for only the Department of State and related agencies for FY 2023, but the Senate amended it to use it as a vehicle to provide continuing appropriations for all federal agencies through December 30, 2022. In case the Senate and House had not both acted on H.R. 2617, the full-year omnibus appropriations bill mentioned below, and the president had the opportunity to sign it into law before the close of business on December 23, when the previous continuing resolution expired. The bill now returns to the House for consideration of the Senate action.

December 22 – The Senate passed H.R. 2617, to amend the description of how performance goals are achieved. The bill was used as the vehicle to pass the annual appropriations bills for all federal agencies, including the National Park Service, along with many unrelated authorization bills from various committees in Congress, including several park and public lands bills. Below are the details of those bills that affect the NPS.

Division G – Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act

The NPS is appropriated \$3.475 billion in discretionary appropriations in FY 2023, which is an increase of \$210 million above the FY 2022 level. Additionally, the bill provides NPS with mandatory appropriations of \$461.8 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund as well as \$1.33 billion from the Legacy Restoration Fund of the Great American Outdoors Act to address the deferred maintenance backlog. A further breakdown and highlights of these funds is below.

Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) – The bill provides \$2.923 billion, which is \$210.3 million more than the FY 2022 appropriation. This amount provides for fixed costs, as well as the following:

- \$31.5 million to restore staffing capacity.
- \$24.6 million for new and critical responsibilities, including \$19.3 million for parks that preserve stories of underrepresented communities.
- \$5.7 million for tribal liaison support.

- \$5.3 million for the Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers program.
- \$18.8 million for the National Trails System.
- \$5.38 million for the African American Civil Rights Network.
- \$2.5 million for the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.
- an increase of \$776,000 for the Volunteers in Parks program.
- \$5 million to the National Park Foundation to be used for matching grants for projects to benefit the National Park System.
- An increase of \$8 million to address employee housing needs.

National Recreation and Preservation (NR&P) – The bill provides \$92.5 million, which is \$8.6 million more than the FY 2022 appropriation. Within this amount, the bill provides the following:

- \$13 million for the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program.
- \$3 million for the Chesapeake Gateways and Trails program.
- \$3.4 million for Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Grants.
- \$4.65 million for Japanese American Confinement Sites Grants.
- \$2.75 million for American Indian and Native Hawaiian Art and Culture Grants.
- \$29.2 million for the National Heritage Area Program.

Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) – The bill provides \$204.5 million, which is \$31.4 million more than the FY 2022 appropriation. Within this amount is the following:

- \$24 million for the African American Civil Rights Grants.
- \$12 million for the Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants for rural villages and downtown areas.
- \$26.5 million for Save America's Treasures Grants.
- \$10 million for the Semiquincentennial Grants to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the country's founding, including Revolutionary War monuments.
- \$62.1 million for grants to State Historic Preservation Offices.
- \$11 million for grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Construction – The bill provides \$239.8 million, which is \$13.8 million above the amount provided in the FY 2022 appropriation.

Centennial Challenge – The bill provides \$15 million for the Centennial Challenge matching grant program, which is the same as the amount provided in the FY 2022 appropriation.

Along with these funding levels, the bill includes the following authorizations:

- Sec. 116 – Authorizes the so-called Long Bridge project, which is a conveyance of approximately four acres of NPS land for a railroad bridge crossing the Potomac River between Washington, D.C. and Virginia. The project includes both a pedestrian and bicycle bridge.
- Sec. 119 – Increases grant ceiling amounts for various national heritage areas or extends the time period for their authorization to be eligible for grant funds.

- Sec. 122 – Removes the land acquisition funding ceiling for the Lowell National Historical Park.
- Sec. 123 – Extends the Visitor Experience Improvement concessions authority of the National Park Service for an additional two years.
- Sec. 124 – Authorizes Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area to continue to charge fees for certain truck traffic in the park.
- Sec. 421 – Extends the fee authority of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act through October 1, 2024.
- Sec. 444 – Authorizes the Golden Gate National Recreation Area to grant to any state or local government, without charge, an easement or right-of-way over park land for operation and maintenance of the control and prevention of flooding or shoreline erosion.

In addition to the discretionary appropriations noted above, the bill includes a list of projects that will receive the \$1.3 billion in annual mandatory appropriations for deferred maintenance projects funded by the Legacy Restoration Fund of the Great American Outdoors Act. The list of projects is the same as identified in the president's budget request.

The bill also appropriates \$461.8 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to the NPS to be allocated as follows:

- \$66.8 million for federal land acquisition in parks.
- \$14.5 million for acquisition administration.
- \$14.5 million for recreational access.
- \$3.4 million for emergencies, hardships, relocations and deficiencies.
- \$7 million for inholdings, donations, and exchanges.
- \$200 million for state conservation formula assistance grants.
- \$125 million for Outdoor Recreation Legacy competitive grants.
- \$11 million for state conservation grants administration.
- \$20 million for American Battlefield Protection Program grants.

Division N – Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023

Besides the amounts shown in Division G, above, for the National Park Service, Title VII of this division of the bill provides funding of \$1.5 billion in the NPS Construction account to address wildfires, hurricanes, and other natural disasters occurring in and prior to 2023.

Division DD – Public Land Management

This division includes several national park and public land authorization bills that Congress was unable to enact separately prior to adjournment. Those of interest to the NPS are as follows:

Title I – Department of the Interior Provisions

- Sec. 101 - Requires the Secretary of the Interior to carry out a 5-year pilot program to prioritize the use of native plant species within geographically diverse units of the

National Park System and on public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

- Sec. 103 – Requires the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture (through the U.S. Forest Service), to develop within two years of enactment, a multi-purpose cadastre (inventory) of federal real property under their jurisdiction to support federal land management activities on federal real property.

Title III – Land Exchanges and Conveyances

- Sec. 306 – Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to convey a right-of-way to allow the relocation of a main segment of a natural gas distribution pipeline along two roads within Valley Forge NHP.

Title IV – Wild and Scenic River Designations

- Sec. 401 – Designates approximately 31 miles of the York River and its tributaries in Maine as a recreational river. The river segments shall not be managed as a unit of the National Park System, but in accordance with the York River Watershed Stewardship Plan.
- Sec. 402 – Designates approximately 40.3 miles of the Housatonic in Connecticut as scenic and recreational rivers. The river segments shall not be managed as a unit of the National Park System, but in accordance with the Housatonic River Management Plan.
- Sec. 403 – Designates approximately 50 miles of the Little Manatee River and its tributaries in Florida for study for potential addition to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System.
- Sec. 404 – Designates segments of the Kissimmee River in Florida from 16 miles downstream of Lake Kissimmee and ending 15 miles upstream of Okeechobee for study for potential addition to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Title V – National Trails System

- Sec. 501 – Designates the approximately 16.5-mile Chilkoot National Historic Trail in Alaska within the National Trails System.
- Sec. 502 – Designates the approximately 500-mile Alaska Long Trail from Seward to Fairbanks, Alaska for study for potential addition to the National Trails System.
- Sec. 503 – Designates the approximately 1,454-mile Buckeye Trail from Lake Erie to the Ohio River in Ohio for study for potential addition to the National Trails System.

Title VI – National Park Service Provisions

Subtitle A – Additions to the National Park System

- Sec. 601 – Establishes the New Philadelphia National Historic Site in Illinois.

Subtitle B – Modifications to Existing Units of the National Park System

- Sec. 611 – Modifies the boundary of Sunset Crater National Monument to include approximately 98 acres of U.S. Forest Service land that the NPS currently

administers with its visitor center and administrative buildings.

- Sec. 612 – Authorizes the addition of the Nystrom Elementary School building to the Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park, along with any other historic properties that meet designated criteria.
- Sec. 613 – Extends the authorization for the Cape Cod National Seashore Advisory Commission through 2029.
- Sec. 614 – Modifies the boundary of the Cane River Creole National Historical Park to include approximately 46 acres of part of the Magnolia Plantation that includes the main house and surrounding land, and which was not among the lands previously donated in 1997.
- Sec. 615 - Authorizes Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area to continue to charge fees for certain truck traffic in the park through September 30, 2026.
- Sec. 616 – Modifies the boundary of the Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield to include the approximately 25-acre Newtonia Battlefield.
- Sec. 617 – Authorizes the Secretary to acquire lands for visitor center and administrative purposes to be added to the boundary of Ste. Genevieve National Historical Park.
- Sec. 618 – Authorizes the conveyance of land within the boundary of Acadia National Park for the construction of affordable park workforce housing and for administrative purposes of the park.
- Sec. 619 – Redesignates Pullman National Monument as Pullman National Historical Park and establishes its authorities in statute.
- Sec. 620 – Authorizes the addition of approximately 200 acres of land to Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park.
- Sec. 621 – Requires the installation of a plaque in the area of the Ram Head Trail within Virgin Islands National Park to commemorate the slave rebellion that began on St. John on November 23, 1733.

Subtitle C – National Park Service Studies

- Sec. 631 – Authorizes a study of the John P. Parker House in Ripley, Ohio as a potential unit of the National Park System.
- Sec. 632 – Authorizes a study of Deerfield, a historically black agricultural settlement founded by Oliver Toussaint Jackson in Colorado, as a potential unit of the National Park System.
- Sec. 633 – Authorizes a study of sites within 100 miles of Memphis, Tennessee, including eight specified sites in which lynchings took place, as a potential unit of the National Park System.
- Sec. 634 – Authorizes a study of the coastline and adjacent areas to Santa Monica Bay from Will Rogers State Beach to Torrance Beach in California, as a potential unit of the National Park System.

Subtitle D – National Park Service Programs

- Sec. 641 – Authorizes the NPS to acquire up to 20 acres of land in Frederick, Maryland for purposes of supporting the Historic Preservation Training Center.

- Sec. 642 – Authorizes the waiver of an application fee for a special use permit for any veterans’ special event at a war memorial on land administered by the NPS in Washington, D.C. or its environs.
- Sec. 643 – Establishes the United States African American Burial Grounds Preservation Program by the NPS and to provide grants and technical assistance for such purposes.
- Sec. 644 – Authorizes the Norman Y. Mineta Japanese American Confinement Education Grants program to educate individuals on the historical importance of Japanese American incarceration during World War II.
- Sec. 645 – Establishes the Japanese American World War II History Network within the NPS to review studies, disseminate educational materials, enter into cooperative agreements to provide technical assistance, adopt an official symbol for the network, and to join units and programs of the NPS concerning Japanese American incarceration during World War II.
- Sec. 646 – Reauthorizes and increases from \$5 million to \$10 million the annual matching funds authorized for appropriation to the National Park Foundation to benefit parks and programs of the NPS.

Title VII – Commemorative Works and National Memorials

- Sec. 701 – Designates the Kol Israel Foundation Holocaust Memorial in Bedford Heights, Ohio, as a national memorial. The memorial is not a unit of the National Park System and federal funds may not be expended for any purpose related to the memorial.
- Sec. 702 – Authorizes the Women Who Worked on the Home Front Foundation to establish a commemorative work on federal land within Washington, D.C., and its environs.
- Sec. 703 – Extends the authority through September 30, 2027 for the establishment of the National Liberty Memorial commemorative work on federal land within Washington, D.C., and its environs.
- Sec. 704 – Authorizes the National Service Animals Monument Corporation to establish a commemorative work on federal land within Washington, D.C., and its environs.
- Sec. 705 – Authorizes the Embassy of France in Washington, D.C., to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs to honor the extraordinary contributions of Jean Monnet to restoring peace between European nations and establishing the European Union.
- Sec. 706 – Designates the El Paso Community Healing Garden in El Paso, Texas, as a national memorial. The memorial is not a unit of the National Park System and federal funds may not be expended for any purpose related to the memorial.
- Sec. 707 – Authorizes the Georgetown African American Historic Landmark Project and Tour to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs to commemorate the enslaved individuals who endured the Middle Passage.
- Sec. 708 – Approves the location of a memorial to commemorate the commitment of the United States to a free press by honoring journalists who sacrificed their lives

in service to that cause in Area I within Washington D.C., and its environs.

- Sec. 709 - Authorizes the Thomas Paine Memorial Association to establish a commemorative work in Washington, D.C., and its environs.
- Sec. 710 – Establishes the Ukrainian Independence Park on land within Washington, D.C.

House Actions

December 12 – The House passed the following:

- H.R. 7496, to direct the Secretary of the Interior to install a plaque at the peak of Ram Head in the Virgin Islands National Park on St. John, United States Virgin Islands, to commemorate the slave rebellion that began on St. John in 1733.
- H.R. 7952, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to issue a right-of-way permit with respect to a natural gas distribution pipeline within Valley Forge National Historical Park.

December 14 – The House passed H.R. 6611, to authorize the Embassy of France in Washington, DC, to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs to honor the extraordinary contributions of Jean Monnet to restoring peace between European nations and establishing the European Union.

December 22 – The House passed the following, which all go to the president to be signed into law:

- S. 1942, to standardize the designation of National Heritage Areas, by a vote of 326 yeas to 95 nays. See Senate action of December 20, above, for a list of the bill's provisions.
- S. 3519, to amend the National Trails System Act to designate the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail.
- S. 4949, to amend title 38, U.S. Code, to address green burial sections in national cemeteries.

December 23 – The House passed the following:

- H.R. 4373, to provide further continuing appropriations for FY 2023. The bill previously concerned appropriations for only the Department of State and related agencies for FY 2023, but the Senate amended it to use it as a vehicle to provide continuing appropriations for all federal agencies through December 30, 2022. In case the Senate and House had not both acted on H.R. 2617, the full-year omnibus appropriations bill mentioned above, and the president had the opportunity to sign it into law before the close of business on December 23, when the previous continuing resolution expired. The bill now goes to the president to be signed into law.
- H.R. 2617, to amend the description of how performance goals are achieved by a vote of 225 yeas to 201 nays, with 1 voting present. The bill was used as the

vehicle to pass the annual appropriations bills for all federal agencies, including the National Park Service, along with many unrelated authorization bills from various committees in Congress, including several park and public lands bills. See Senate action of December 22, above, for the list of the bill's provisions that affect the NPS.

Incidents

Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.

Many parks across the south and east Parks close due to bomb cyclone

Due to the impending storm and bomb cyclone sweeping the southern and eastern United States, many parks shut down preemptively and will reopen after damage assessments are complete.

Channel Islands National Park Boat goes aground

On December 15, a 60-foot fishing boat named "Speranza Marie" ran aground in Chinese Harbor on Santa Cruz Island. The boat was carrying 16,000 pounds of dead squid and a crew of six people. None of the crew were hurt during the incident. As of December 19, diving and salvage contractor crews were working to stabilize, defuel, and remove the boat. NPS personnel are assessing how much fuel might have leaked into the intertidal zone and Oiled Wildlife Care Network is on-site to help with wildlife rehabilitation efforts. One dead cormorant has been reported thus far. Staff are also working to remove and dispose of the squid because it is a wildlife attractant. The cause of the incident is under investigation. Source: [KSBY](#)

George Washington Memorial Parkway Semitruck overturns

On December 16, a semitruck flipped on the southbound Baltimore-Washington Parkway just past Maryland Route 201 near Route 50. It was the only vehicle involved in the crash. The driver was taken to the hospital with minor injuries. Traffic backed up for miles and several hours before being able to be cleared. The truck was carrying onions and potatoes as part of a commercial enterprise, which is illegal on NPS-managed roads, and the driver will face a citation. Source: [NBC Washington](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park Kayaking fatality

On December 16, during high flow conditions, a 61-year-old disappeared underwater while kayaking above The Sinks, and did not resurface. NPS staff, as well as personnel from Townsend Fire Department, Blount Special Operations Response Team, and American Medical Response searched for the kayaker. On December 19, the individual

was found deceased near where they went underwater. The individual's body was recovered and transported to Blount County medical examiner's office. Source: [Citizen Times](#), [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)

Haleakalā National Park

Winter storm

On December 18, the park closed the Summit District due to severe weather that was unsafe for vehicles and visitors. The Summit District reopened on December 21. However, as of December 24, wilderness cabin and tent camping both remain closed. The park reported that communication infrastructure was damaged by the storm, and that visitors must exercise extra caution due to delayed emergency response. Source: Haleakalā National Park ([12/18](#), [12/21](#))

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

Brush fire

On December 20, lightning sparked a wildfire in a remote wilderness area of the park below Hilina Pali Lookout. The Hilina Pali Road was closed from Kulanaokuaiki Campground to Hilina Pali Lookout, and the Ka'aha Trail was also closed. As of December 23, the wildfire was 100% contained at five acres and the road and trail were reopened. Source: [Big Island Now](#), Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park ([12/21](#), [12/23](#))

Lake Mead National Recreation Area

Assault investigation ongoing

On August 28, 2022, an individual between 25-35 years old was assaulted by a group of people while camping with family along the shoreline of Lake Mohave's Nelson Landing area. It is thought that the victim would have required medical intervention due to the extent of injuries. Law enforcement from the park and the Investigative Services Branch are seeking information from the public to identify the victim because it may be helpful in other ongoing investigations. Source: [Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)

Petroglyph National Monument

Lawsuit over tasing incident

A 48-page lawsuit has been filed against the National Park Service, the City of Albuquerque, and the U.S. Department of the Interior over a December 2020 incident in the park that resulted in an individual getting tased by a ranger. Two individuals with a dog stepped off the trail in the park and were asked by a ranger to return to the designated path. The party claims they returned to the path, but one refused to give identification and gave a fake name. The situation escalated and the individual was tased by the ranger. The individual was given citations for interfering with agency function, false information, and being off-trail. The individual claims that the rules for trail travel should not apply to them due to Native American heritage. The lawsuit alleges both excessive force and violations

of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. The National Park Service investigated the incident and determined in March 2021 that the officers involved had acted within NPS policy. Source: [KOB4](#), [KRQE](#)

Shenandoah National Park

Missing person's car found in park

On December 12, an individual was reported as missing. The individual's car was located three days later at the Turk Gap Parking area. The individual had filed a backcountry permit for a seven-night trip on the Appalachian Trail, starting September 22. The NPS is searching for any information the public may have. Source: [WRIC](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Coronado National Monument* - On December 21, Arizona Governor Doug Ducey signed an agreement with federal officials to tear down an illegal makeshift border wall built out of old shipping containers along a section of the U.S.-Mexico border, including at Coronado. It is yet unclear when the containers will be removed. Source: [The New York Times](#)
- *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - On December 16, the park reopened the Uēkahuna area. It had been closed since November 9 due to the presence of breeding and nesting nēnē, which are endangered. Park biologists observed that the nēnē family is no longer in the area. The westernmost overlook at Uēkahuna remains closed in case the individuals are nearby. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)
- *Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* - On December 17, the famous wild mountain lion known as P-22 underwent a medical examination that showed significant trauma to his head, right eye, and internal organs, suggesting a vehicle strike. He had been brought into captivity after engaging in unusual behaviors, including attacking a dog on leash. The medical team recommended and performed euthanasia for the cat. He was memorialized on the front page of the *Los Angeles Times*. Source: [National Public Radio](#), [Los Angeles Times](#)
- *Washington Monument* - A 44-year-old individual who used red paint to deface part of the base of the monument on September 20, 2022 was sentenced to a year of probation and fined \$3,035 in restitution to the National Park Service. The individual pled guilty to the misdemeanor of destruction of federal property. Source: [WUSA9](#)

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- Editor: Katie Wallace

- Tech and Production Support: Steve Pittleman, Emily Thompson
- Regular Correspondent: Don Hellmann

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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