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The Coalition Report

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

Coalition Actions

The Coalition sent a letter to National Park Service Director Chuck Sams expressing our appreciation for the level of attention he is giving to issues related to employee morale and to improving diversity in the workforce, but also describing additional concerns that impact the ability of the NPS to efficiently hire a diverse workforce, and concerns related to employee morale that can and should be addressed:

<https://protectnps.org/2022/02/17/40629/>

We submitted a FOIA request that relates to a report that was or should have been prepared by the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks around June 2021 pursuant to Secretarial Order 3398 issued on April 16, 2021:

<https://protectnps.org/2022/02/25/coalition-submits-foia-request-for-revocation-of-secretarys-orders/>

The Coalition also submitted comments on the proposed rule by the National Park Service regarding the Visitor Experience and Improvement Authority (VEIA) contracts:

<https://protectnps.org/2022/03/01/coalition-submits-comments-on-visitor-experience-and-improvement-authority-proposed-rule/>

Executive Council member Sheridan Steele submitted a letter to the *Bangor Daily News*, urging Senators Angus King (I-ME) and Susan Collins (R-ME) to support the push for additional national parks staffing:

<https://protectnps.org/2022/03/02/member-op-ed-national-parks-cant-keep-doing-more-with-less/>

The Coalition submitted written comments and recommendations on the American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas:

<https://protectnps.org/2022/03/03/coalition-submits-written-comments-on-american-conservation-and-stewardship-atlas/>

The Coalition has been involved with the National Parks Second Century Action Coalition for many years. A working group within it is soliciting feedback from non-governmental partners in order to inform advocacy designed to support natural resource management within the National Park System. Interested organizations can help by filling out [this survey](#).

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.

- *NPS removes mask mandate* - In accordance with the Centers for Disease Control, the NPS announced that masks will no longer be required in parks located in areas that fall into the low or moderate range of the recently released COVID-19 Community Levels tool. Source: [WTOP](#)
- *Replacements for derogatory names on federal lands published* - The Department of the Interior's Derogatory Geographic Names Task Force has published a list of replacement names for geographic features with the word "squaw" in them. There are 664 federal land units with the word in the name. [Public comment](#) is currently open on the suggested replacement names through April 25. Source: [Iowa Capital Dispatch](#)
- *NPF launches equity-focused program* - The National Park Foundation announced a new initiative called ParkVentures that will support programs and organizations that address representation, accessibility, and interpretation of underrepresented people in national parks. Source: [PR Newswire](#)
- *Honoring women's history in the parks* - The National Parks Conservation Association is publishing a two-part series on women's contributions to the national parks in honor of women's history month. Source: [National Parks Conservation Association](#)
- *Risk of extreme wildfires rising* - A report issued by the United Nations Environment Program and the non-profit GRID-Arendal projected the risk of extreme wildfires will rise 14% by 2030, 30% by 2050, and 50% by 2100. Wildfires will also move toward the poles and into tropical forests. Source: [The Washington Post](#)

Around the Parks

Park reports are in alphabetical order.

- *Acadia National Park* - A new study in the *Journal of Paleolimnology*, conducted by the NPS and University of Maine, shows that regulations to reduce human-caused sulfur emissions has reduced the acidification of lakes. However, the study also showed that clear-water lakes have recovered less strongly due to climate change. Source: [Phys.org](#)
- *Bandelier National Monument* - Natural Resources Program Manager Sarah Milligan has received the 2022 Dorothy Hoard Stewardship Award from the Friends of Bandelier for her dedication toward stewarding wildlife resources at the park. Source: [Bandelier National Monument](#)
- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - The park held a public discussion on March 3 about some oceanfront homes that are in danger of collapsing onto the beach. The meeting comes on the heels of a home that collapsed on Ocean Drive in Rodanthe, spreading debris along 15 miles of shoreline (reported in Coalition Report 2/23/22). Source: [WAVY](#)
- *Capitol Reef National Park* - The park has opened a set of brand new visitor center exhibits with support from Utah Valley University, Southern Custom Exhibits, and the Capitol Reef Natural History Association. Source: [Capitol Reef National Park](#)
- *Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area* - The city of Johns Creek, GA has entered into a partner design and construction agreement with the National Park Service for the first segment of the Chattahoochee River Greenway, spanning from Cauley Creek to Abbots Bridge Road. Source: [The Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#)
- *Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park* - The park will be rehabilitating Glenn-Kelly Road, Battleline Road, and Poe Road between March 14 and October 30. The roads will be closed one at a time. The \$3.6 million construction contract will be carried out by Estes Brothers Construction of Jonesville, VA. Source: [Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park](#)
- *Chickasaw National Recreation Area* - The Cold Springs Campground will be available by reservation only starting on April 1. Nearby Rock Creek Campground will remain available on a first-come, first-served basis. Source: [Chickasaw National Recreation Area](#)
- *DC Area Parks* - The Department of the Interior Inspector General released a report that demonstrated that the U.S. Park Police dispatch center has significant issues that prevent it from capably fulfilling its purpose, including broken systems, outdated equipment, poor environmental conditions, and a lack of proper training. This puts officers and the public at risk and is a liability for the DOI. Furthermore, it states that the complaints by dispatch center employees to Park Police commanders have been ignored. Park Police Chief Pamela Smith has stated that she has taken steps to resolve the issues and will continue to do so. Source: [The](#)

[Washington Post](#)

- *Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve* - In a court filing on February 22, the Department of the Interior agreed with opponents of the proposed Ambler road, a project that would cross the park and connect the Northwest Arctic with the Dalton Highway to Fairbanks to support large-scale mining. The DOI is reconsidering the federal right-of-way permits that the Trump administration granted. Source: [Alaska Public Media](#)
- *George Washington Memorial Parkway* - The NPS and the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club hosted a ceremony on March 5 to officially reopen a half-mile section of trail at Turkey Run Park. More than 100 volunteers gave over 1,000 hours of work over four years to build the trail, which gives better access to the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail and the Potomac River. Source: [George Washington Memorial Parkway](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - The park announced they will be increasing the cost of backcountry permit fees, starting July 1. Costs will rise from \$8 per person or stock animal per night to \$12, in addition to the \$10 per permit (unchanged). Source: [St. George News](#)
- *Grand Teton National Park* - The NPS, in coordination with The Conservation Fund and Hauge, Laughlin, and Resor families, has acquired a 35-acre parcel inside the park's southwest boundary by utilizing funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Source: [KMTN](#)
- *Great Sand Dunes National Park* - U.S. Senators Michael Bennet (CO-D) and John Hickenlooper (CO-D) sent a letter to Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack expressing opposition to the proposal by Renewable Water Resources to export water from underneath the park, Baca National Wildlife Refuge and the Closed Basin Project to Douglas County. Source: [Colorado Newsline](#)
- *Gulf Islands National Seashore* - On March 5, the park reopened park managed facilities on Ship Island, including Fort Massachusetts, restrooms, pavilions, the boardwalk, and pier. Commercial concessions will also resume. Access to Ship Island has been closed since October 26 due to Tropical Storm Zeta. Source: [Gulf Islands National Seashore](#)
- *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - The park has created a new video series that shares authentic Hawaiian cultural practices. The park's in-person programs are on hold, so these videos provide an outlet to share the Hawaiian culture more widely. The [videos](#) were produced in-house, and were supported and funded by the Friends of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park and the Hawai'i Pacific Parks Association. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)

- *Johnstown Flood National Memorial* - The park, in coordination with the Cambria County Conservation Recreation Authority, will begin construction this spring on a trail extension from the park's property to the breast of the dam on the Path of the Flood Trail. The Recreation Authority is also working on other parts of the trail and signage. Source: [The Tribune-Democrat](#)
- *New River Gorge National Park and Preserve* - A recreational trail grant from the West Virginia Department of Transportation will build 4.5 miles of trails to help connect Babcock State Park to New River Gorge. Source: [Metro News](#)
- *Olympic National Park* - On March 1, in cooperation with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the park will close fishing in the Hoh, South Fork Hoh, Bogachiel, Dickey, and Quillayute river systems through May 31 due to low winter steelhead runs. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Rock Creek Park* - The NPS announced that it will remove Melvin Hazen's name from a park and trail. Hazen was a city commissioner in Washington D.C. who coordinated the destruction and displacement of Black neighborhoods. The park has been renamed Fort Reno. Source: [DCist](#)
- *Rock Creek Park* - From March 21-28, the NPS will utilize ground-penetrating radar to look for possible remains and artifacts at two of Washington, D.C.'s oldest African American cemeteries. A small part of Rock Creek Trail will be closed from now until the end of the month. The property has never been surveyed. Source: [Fox 5](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - On February 16, Superintendent Darla Sidles and Management Specialist and Public Affairs Officer Kyle Patterson spoke at a virtual meeting put on by the League of Women Voters of Estes Park. They outlined the top four priorities for the park: fire recovery, visitor use management, employee housing, and the Fall River Entrance Project. Source: [Loveland Reporter-Herald/Estes Park Trail-Gazette](#)
- *Salem Maritime National Historic Site, Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site* - The NPS has put out a new [online resource](#) titled "African Americans in Essex County: An Annotated Guide." Source: [Boston Globe](#)
- *Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* - The NPS released a new [13-minute film](#) that documents a community effort to change the name of a peak with a racial slur to a name that honors the first Black family, the Ballards, that homesteaded in the Santa Monica Mountains. Source: [Sierra Sun Times](#)
- *Shenandoah National Park* - *The Washington Post* ran [an article](#) about the new Old Rag permit system, including why it's been instituted and opinions of hikers both in

favor and against the system. Source: *The Washington Post*

- *Thomas Edison National Historical Park* - The park announced the release of 2,400 digitized historic Edison disc sound recordings online through the University of California, Santa Barbara Library Special Research Collections. The recordings include many rare recordings, including unissued test pressings, all from Thomas Edison's personal collection. Source: [Thomas Edison National Historical Park](#)
- *Vicksburg National Military Park* - On March 1, the park began requiring entrance fees for entry. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Wilson's Creek National Battlefield* - The park recently received a donation of previously unpublished Mary Whitney Phelps papers by donation from the Wilson's Creek National Battlefield Foundation, who acquired the document at auction. The park partnered with the Springfield-Greene County Library District to place the items online in their digital collection. Source: [Wilson's Creek National Battlefield](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - In honor of the park's 150th anniversary, *The Washington Post* ran [an article](#) about challenges to the park in its early years after becoming the first national park. Source: *The Washington Post*
- *Zion National Park* - On February 25, Superintendent Jeff Bradybaugh gave a "state of the park" address, outlining the challenges inherent with record visitation in 2021 and potential management solutions. Source: [The Spectrum](#)
- *Amache National Historic Site (NHS status currently pending presidential signature)* - *Colorado Newsline* published [an article](#) with survivors and congressional representatives about the preservation of the site as a unit of the National Park Service and its personal and societal significance. Source: *Colorado Newsline*
- *Springfield Race Riot National Monument (pending legislation)* - The Springfield, IL City Council passed an ordinance to donate a piece of property to the National Park Service, should the 1908 Springfield Race Riot National Monument Act get passed. Source: [The State Journal-Register](#)

Personnel Changes

- *Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site, John Muir National Historic Site, Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial, Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historical Park* - K. Lynn Berry was selected as the new superintendent. She has 11 years of NPS experience, most recently as the superintendent at Congaree National Park. Source: [Danville San Ramon](#)
- *Region 11 (Alaska Region)* - Grant Hilderbrand has been selected as the Associate Regional Director for Resources. He has 12 years of experience with the NPS and U.S. Geological Survey, most recently as the NPS Alaska Regional Natural

Resource Team Lead. Source: [NPS Region 11](#)

- *San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park* - Paul DePrey was selected as the new superintendent. He has 20 years of NPS experience, most recently as superintendent of Salem Maritime and Saugus Iron Works National Historic Sites. He will begin his new role in April. Source: [San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park](#)
- *Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site* - Nathan Wilson was selected as the new superintendent. He has 17 years of NPS experience, most recently as the facility manager for Ulysses S. Grant NHS and Ste. Genevieve National Historical Park and the acting superintendent for the last four months. He will begin his new role this month. Source: [Call Newspapers](#)

Park People

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

Deceased

- Donald Graham, 93, passed away on February 27. He worked as a seasonal ranger in Glacier National Park in the 1960s. Source: [Legacy/Fort Wayne Newspapers](#)
- Michael E. Healy, 78, passed away on February 26. He worked for 20 years with the United States Park Police and for 18 years as the administrative officer at Acadia National Park. Source: [Mount Desert Islander](#)
- Donald Burton Myers, 89, passed away recently. He worked as a law enforcement ranger at Yellowstone National Park in 1990. Source: [Legacy/Sonora Union Democrat](#)
- Jan Ownbey Perkinson, 78, passed away on February 23. She worked for the NPS at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in 1989. Source: [Cleveland Daily Banner](#)

Open for Comment

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

- *National Park Service* - Public comment is now open on proposed regulations that would modernize and streamline concessions contracting under the new Visitor Experience Improvements Authority given to the NPS by Congress. [Comments](#) are open until March 28. Source: [NPS Office of Communications](#)
- *Appalachian National Scenic Trail* - Civic engagement is now open on a Visitor Use Management Plan for Virginia's Triple Crown. There is [a story map](#) describing the project in-depth. [Comments](#) are open until March 31. Source: [WSLS](#)

- *Buffalo National River* - Public comment is now open on an environmental assessment for the reconstruction of Cave Mountain Road, which is being funded by the State of Arkansas with road work being done by the Newton County Roads Department. [Comments](#) are open until March 9. Source: [Buffalo National River](#)
- *Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park* - Public comment is now open on a General Management Plan Amendment. [Comments](#) are open until March 30. Source: [Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park](#)
- *Everglades National Park* - Public comment is now open on an environmental assessment for the Shark Valley Site Plan, which would provide more parking, shade structures, and flood prevention strategies. [Comments](#) are open until March 11. Source: [Everglades National Park](#)
- *Fort Monroe National Monument* - Public comment is open on a Rapid Visitor Use Assessment for Area 4 of North Beach, also known as Dog Beach. The area is currently under the control of the U.S. Army, and would include areas needing site remediation before it could be added to the park. The assessment will inform the level of cleanup needed to prepare the site. [Comments](#) are open until March 31. Source: [Fort Monroe National Monument](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - Public comment is now open on a revised environmental assessment for a proposed mountain bike area in Wears Valley. The previous EA was put in front of the public in October 2020, but needed to be revised to protect fragile karst resources in the area. [Comments](#) are open until March 10. Source: [Smoky Mountain News](#)
- *Haleakalā National Park* - Public comment is now open on potential alternatives to be considered for an air tour management plan by the NPS and Federal Aviation Administration. [Comments](#) are open until April 1. Source: [Haleakalā National Park](#)
- *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - Public comment is now open on a disaster recovery plan by the NPS and U.S. Geological Survey to repair, replace, relocate or remove critical park infrastructure and USGS-operated facilities and equipment damaged during the 2018 eruption and summit collapse on Kīlauea volcano. [Comments](#) are open until March 11. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)
- *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - Public comment is now open on potential alternatives to be considered for an air tour management plan by the NPS and Federal Aviation Administration. [Comments](#) are open until April 1. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)
- *Joshua Tree National Park* - Public comment is now open on a draft Climbing Management Plan. Extensive background information and interactive maps are available in [a Story Map](#). [Comments](#) are now open until March 13 (extended from

February 27). Source: [Joshua Tree National Park](#)

- *Joshua Tree National Park* - Public comment is now open on a plan to construct a new West Entrance Station about half a mile further into the park from the current location to resolve traffic and efficiency issues. Comments are open until March 11. Source: [Joshua Tree National Park](#)
- *Mount Rainier National Park* - Public comment is now open on a proposed rule change to move all fishing regulations to the Superintendent's Compendium and to eliminate restrictions on taking nonnative fish. [Comments](#) are open until March 14. Source: [Mount Rainier National Park](#)
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - Public comment is now open on a plan to plant giant sequoia seedlings in areas that burned severely during the 2020 Castle Fire. [Comments](#) are open until March 25. Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#)
- *Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve* - Public comment is now open on a Special Use Permit application for non-exclusive use of Slaven's Roadhouse from October 1, 2022 through February 1, 2023. Comments must be submitted by mail by May 5. Source: [NPS Region 11](#)
- *Emancipation National Historical Trail (proposed NPS site)* - Public comment and outreach questions are now open on a feasibility study for the trail, which would follow the 51-mile route from Galveston to Houston, commemorating Juneteenth, when the last of the slaves in the United States were emancipated. [Comments](#) are open until March 31. Source: [E&E News](#)

Other Department of the Interior News

- *DOI fulfills settlements of Native water rights claims* - Utilizing \$2.5 billion in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding, the Indian Water Rights Settlement Completion Fund will deliver long-promised water resources to Tribes. There are 34 congressionally enacted Indian Water Rights settlements that have been resolved through negotiated settlements. 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.

New Public Laws

February 18 – The president signed into law H.R. 6617, making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022 (Public Law 117–86). The law provides continuing FY 2022 appropriations to federal agencies through the earlier of March 11, 2022, or the enactment of the applicable appropriations act.

Incidents

Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.

Cuyahoga Valley National Park Emergency riverbank stabilization

Due to significant erosion from the Cuyahoga River, the NPS and Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad have modified train operations and are completing emergency riverbank stabilization in Brecksville near the Columbia Run picnic area. Source: [Cuyahoga Valley National Park](#)

Cuyahoga Valley National Park Visitor found dead

On March 3, a 31-year-old was found deceased in a wooded area off Valley View Road in Sagamore Hills Township. The preliminary determination of death was due to exposure, and the Summit County Medical Examiner's Office and NPS are still investigating. The victim was identified as a person wanted on a warrant for allegedly assaulting a local police officer and had failed to appear for the hearing in January 2022. Source: *Akron Beacon Journal* ([3/4](#), [3/7](#))

DC Area Parks Deer positive for COVID-19

On February 25, the NPS announced that routine white-tailed deer disease samplings in several DC-area parks have revealed that some deer are positive for the virus that causes COVID-19. Thus far, positive samplings by the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and Pennsylvania State University researchers have been found at Catoctin Mountain Park, Rock Creek Park, Monocacy National Battlefield, and Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park. The NPS expects they'll see similar results at Antietam National Battlefield and Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say that the risk of getting COVID-19 from animals in the U.S., including wildlife, is low. The NPS donates all suitable meat from its deer management operations to local food banks, and though there is no evidence that humans can get COVID-19 through handling or eating game meat, the NPS has contacted local food banks to discuss their venison donations. Source: [WUSA9](#)

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area Visitor falls to death

On February 14, a 29-year old visitor went outside the safety railing at Horseshoe Bend Overlook and fell off a 1,000 foot cliff. The victim's body was found and recovered by a helicopter crew and transported to Flagstaff. The incident is under investigation by Coconino County and the NPS. Source: [KNAU](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Kayaker drowns

On February 24, a 34-year-old kayaker on the Ocanaluftee River went underwater, floated over swift rapids before being pinned between a fallen tree and the river bank. Companions of the kayaker alerted authorities. The victim was freed by emergency responders after 40 minutes and was pronounced dead at the scene. Source: [Fox 8](#)

Point Reyes National Seashore

Person found deceased in ocean

On February 25, a vessel was spotted grounded on some rocks near Elephant Rock. As Coast Guard crews investigated the boat, they discovered the boat was unmanned, and began searching for people. Sonoma County Sheriffs, NPS personnel, and personal watercraft crews assisted in the search. A Coast Guard helicopter crew located an unresponsive person in the water, and a subsequent boat crew found that the victim was deceased. The incident is still under investigation and it is unclear whether the victim is related to the boat. While the victim was being recovered, the boat drifted and ran ashore on Kehoe Beach, and the Coast Guard and NPS are working to remove the boat and ensure public safety. Trails to the beach were closed temporarily. Source: [KPIX](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - On February 28, a federal judge threw out the lawsuit by several hundred people against the NPS for failing to warn people about the 2016 Gatlinburg fires. The judge said that the families failed to include their core assertion in claims documents. The plaintiffs stated that they will be appealing the decision. Source: [Knox News](#)

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

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."

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.

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