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The Coalition Report

Wednesday, September 7, 2022

Coalition Actions

The Coalition signed on to [a letter](#) sent to Interior Secretary Deb Haaland in support of her Secretarial Order to phase out the procurement, sale, and distribution of single-use plastic products and packaging across Department of the Interior lands and offices by 2032, and urging the Department to do even more.

We issued a statement of support for the "National Park Service System Plan," and its findings. This plan was released in 2017 but has now been formally transmitted to Congress by NPS Director Chuck Sams. You can read [the plan and accompanying letter](#) sent by Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV).

The Coalition sent [a letter](#) to the NPS in support of the 1908 Springfield Race Riot Special Resource Study.

Coalition Vice Chair Don Hellmann was joined by Janae Field, Executive Director of the Frontera Land Alliance, in [a virtual webinar](#) for Congressional staff to discuss the importance of conservation.

We issued a [press release](#) celebrating passage of the Inflation Reduction Act, which supports NPS staffing to monitor and respond to the impacts of climate change, as well as makes meaningful and needed reforms to the oil and gas leasing process.

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.

- *Commercial filming on government property not protected by 1st Amendment* - On August 23, a U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia found that the act of commercial filming on government property is not an inherently protected activity of the First Amendment. In 2018, an individual was cited with a misdemeanor for commercial filming at Colonial National Historical Park without a permit. The individual sued the U.S. Attorney General, Department of the Interior, and National Park Service, challenging its constitutionality. In January 2021, a U.S. District Judge sided with the plaintiff and issued an injunction barring permit and fee requirements for commercial filming. That decision was overturned 2-1 in the Court of Appeals. The injunction has been lifted and the plaintiff is considering their next options, which could include petitioning the U.S. Supreme Court. Source: [Hollywood Reporter](#)
- *GAO recommends competitive grant program changes* - On August 23, the U.S. Government Accountability Office released a report with recommendations to improve Department of the Interior grant processes, including requiring the documentation of award decision rationales and providing/using clear selection criteria so that grants are awarded more fairly and transparently. One example was of NPS leadership making an award to a lower-ranked applicant rather than a recommended applicant, with no written documentation to support the decision. Source: [U.S. Government Accountability Office](#)
- *NPS national awards given* - On August 25, the National Park Service and National Park Foundation held a ceremony to give national awards for excellence. 15 individuals, groups, and parks received awards, found [here](#). The NPS also recently announced the 2021 awards for excellence and extraordinary service in aviation, found [here](#). Source: National Park Service Office of Communications, *Fire Aviation*
- *DOI releases DEIA Strategic Plan* - On August 26, the Department of the Interior released its Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Plan, which outlines the agency's objectives to improve its efforts. Key goals include improving recruitment and hiring tactics to reach underrepresented groups, foster inclusive and safe workplaces, and provide opportunities for professional growth and advancement for employees. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$489K for battlefield interpretation* - On August 31, the NPS' American Battlefield Protection Program awarded \$489,200 in Battlefield Interpretation Grants for six projects in three states (and one traveling exhibit). The funding comes from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *EPA puts 15 states on notice for lack of haze plans* - The Environmental Protection

Agency issued notices to fifteen states for their failure to submit complete regional haze State Implementation Plans for the second planning period. The program calls for state and federal agencies to improve visibility in national parks and wilderness areas. They have two years to get an SIP approved or the EPA will institute a Federal Implementation Plan for these states. Source: [National Parks Conservation Association](#), [Environmental Protection Agency](#)

- *More climate change actions needed in federal projects* - *The Hill* published [an op-ed](#) by Joe Minott, the executive director of the Clean Air Council, arguing for more focus on climate change in federal project execution. Specifically, the op-ed describes Independence Hall National Historical Park's ongoing conversion from steam energy to on-site fossil fuel boilers and emissions stacks, among other examples. Source: *The Hill*
- *President should designate more national monuments* - *The Center for American Progress* published [a white paper](#) arguing that President Joe Biden should designate more national monuments to better tell diverse American stories and protect culturally significant lands. Source: *The Center for American Progress*
- *Challenges to fire protection for Indigenous lands and resources* - *KCET* ran [an article](#) about the lack of resources available for fighting wildfires on Tribal lands, as well as the lack of awareness of cultural resource protection when wildfires take place on federal lands. Source: *KCET*
- *Stories/legends from the national parks* - *Whalebone Magazine* published "[The National Park Issue](#)" this month, focused on quirky stories and legends from around the National Park System, including a Shenandoah ranger who has been struck by lightning seven times, the purchase of Mammoth Cave to be used as a tuberculosis sanitarium in the early 1800s, and the legends of Yucca Man at Joshua Tree, the Green Lady at Haleakalā, and UFOs at Great Sand Dunes. Source: *Whalebone Magazine*
- *USFS makes improvements to grant programs* - On July 22, U.S. Forest Service Chief Randy Moore announced policy changes that will allow Tribes and other underresourced communities and partners to better access grant funding. They will do this by changing matching requirements to better acknowledge diverse types of in-kind support, eliminating a required financial contribution when contracting with third parties, waiving policy match requirements for agreements with Tribal governments, and introducing a process for waiving match requirements for underserved communities. Source: [U.S. Forest Service](#)
- *Obama wins Emmy for national parks documentary* - Former President Barack Obama won the outstanding narrator Emmy Award for his work on the *Netflix* documentary, "Our Great National Parks." The film was produced by Higher Ground, Barack and Michelle Obama's production company. He is the second U.S.

president to win an Emmy. Source: [CNN](#)

Around the Parks

Park reports are in alphabetical order.

- *Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area* - On August 28, the park announced the completion of the repair and rehabilitation of Station Camp Creek and Bear Creek Loop Horse Trails. Both trails are now open. Heavy rain events from 2019 to 2021 had damaged portions of both trails. Source: [Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area](#)
- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - On August 23, the park finalized a Finding of No Significant Impact for the Ocracoke Light Station rehabilitation project, approving the preferred alternative that will elevate parts of the lighthouse to protect it against rising sea levels and heavy storms. Source: [Island Free Press](#)
- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - On August 24, Superintendent David Hallac held a public meeting to discuss the state of oceanfront homes in Rodanthe. Three homes collapsed into the ocean there in early 2022, creating miles-long debris flows at the park. The park and county officials have encouraged homeowners to move their homes because they are in ongoing danger from storms and rising sea levels. The seashore is eroding at 10-15 feet per year. Superintendent Hallac said that two homeowners have moved their homes, and several others are working on permitting to move their homes further back or to other lots. There are 24 homeowners officials are working with. Debris clean-up from the collapsed homes is ongoing, and the park has purchased a new raking machine to remove small debris along the shoreline. Source: [Ocracoke Observer](#)
- *Death Valley National Park* - *Outside* published [an article](#) about challenges to tracking heat illnesses and opportunities to improve to improve public health outcomes. Death Valley is utilized as a case study into the challenges to tracking this type of data. Source: *Outside*
- *Fort Monroe National Monument* - The National Park Service will be ending the short-term lease agreement with Paradise Ocean Club on September 30, and re-announced a Request for Proposal Opportunity for the ocean club. The Paradise Ocean Club owner has publicly protested the decision to end their long-term lease negotiations, calling it "without cause." The official press release by the park says, "The decision to re-announce will allow the NPS to clarify the vision, scale, and scope of activities at the beach club that are appropriate in a national park setting for the enjoyment of all visitors." Source: [WAVY](#), [Brett Hall News Twitter page](#), [Fort Monroe National Monument](#)
- *Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve* - The humor media outlet *McSweeney's* published [a satirical article](#) about a "Labradoodle Integration Project" at the park that would release hundreds of labradoodles in place of wolves

to enhance tourism opportunities. Source: [McSweeney's](#)

- *Gettysburg National Military Park* - On September 6, Historic Preservation Training Center staff started work to replace the patina on the Virginia Memorial. The current patina shows areas of wear and is not historically accurate. The work is expected to be complete by September 30. Source: [Gettysburg National Military Park](#)
- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area* - The NASA Earth Observatory published [an article](#) with satellite photos showing the current state of Lake Powell, which is at its lowest level since it was filled in the 1960s, in comparison with photos from 2017 when the lake was at its highest for the last decade. Source: *NASA Earth Observatory*
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - The park has released a Prospectus for 16 contracts to provide interpretive multi-day whitewater tours on the Colorado River. The contracts would begin in 2024 and be for a term of 10 years. Proposals are due by November 28. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)
- *Grand Teton National Park* - *Buckrail* published [an article](#) about the 25th anniversary of the Grand Teton National Park Foundation, which has successfully raised \$100 million for improvements in the park in that time. Source: *Buckrail*
- *Indiana Dunes National Park* - The park issued a Finding of No Significant Impact for the Plant Gathering for Traditional Purposes Environmental Assessment, which was developed jointly by the National Park Service and Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians. The selected alternative allows enrolled members of the Tribe to conduct traditional gathering of plants and plant parts at the park and authorizes agreements to continue cultural practices in their traditional places. Source: [Indiana Dunes National Park](#)
- *Mammoth Cave National Park* - The park has received \$6.5 million in Great American Outdoors Act funding to rehabilitate about a mile of trail in the cave from the New Entrance to the Frozen Niagara entrance. The current trail has not had significant improvements since the 1930s when the Civilian Conservation Corps constructed it. The project is expected to begin in Fall 2022 and end in Summer 2023. Some cave tours will be unavailable during this time. Source: [Mammoth Cave National Park](#)
- *Morristown National Historical Park* - Students from the Stephen T. Mather Building and Arts High School recently helped the NPS' Historic Architecture, Conservation, and Engineering team replace a footbridge at Jockey Hollow on the Old Camp Trail. The bridge was built in 1939 by the Civilian Conservation Corps and last repaired in 1993. It was celebrated with a ribbon cutting on August 19. Source: [Morristown Green](#)

- *National Park of American Samoa* - Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs Carmen G. Cantor visited the island recently to discuss efforts to support wetlands through Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding. While there, Assistant Secretary Cantor also visited the visitor center of the park. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Olympic National Park* - The park has begun a \$1.7 million project to improve safety and accessibility on Obstruction Point Road and Hurricane Ridge Road. The work started on September 6 and will finish on October 27 and closures will be in place. The work is being done by Bruch and Bruch Construction of Port Angeles, Washington. Source: [Olympic National Park](#)
- *Petrified Forest National Park* - The park has constructed the Petrified Fur-Rest Bark Park, a dog park near the Painted Desert Visitor Center. The dog park was built collaboratively with NPS staff, Youth Conservation Corps participants, and a local Girl Scout completing her Gold Award Project. The Girl Scout secured the majority of the materials for the project, including scouring the park's "boneyard" maintenance area for reuseable materials, and utilizing funds from cookie sales and the Holbrook Kiwanis Club. Source: [Petrified Forest National Park](#)
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - The Turtle Island Restoration Network recently released an independent water quality report by geoenvironmental engineer Douglas Lovell that shows water pollution that is "dangerous to public health and the environment." The report comes out a week before the California Coastal Commission will vote to approve a water-quality strategy presented by the NPS in the park's General Management Plan. A previous draft of that strategy was rejected by the commission last spring. Source: [Center for Biological Diversity](#)
- *Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* - The park will start a construction project on September 19 to revitalize the Cheeseboro Canyon parking area and trails, including potable water installation, storm drainage utilities, gravel-paved roadways and lots, a pedestrian pathway, and a new vault toilet. The project is expected to be complete in Summer 2023. Some areas will be closed during construction. The project is utilizing federal funding, as well as private funding from the National Park Foundation, the Santa Monica Mountains Fund, and the Clifford Holmes Estate, and it is being executed by a contract with AMA Diversified Construction Group from Torrance, California. Source: [Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area](#)
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - A new book, *Dawn at Mineral King Valley*, chronicles the U.S. Forest Service's attempts to court the Disney Company to develop a ski resort in Mineral King, which was opposed by the Sierra Club and brought all the way to the Supreme Court. It was eventually shut down and the land was incorporated into Sequoia National Park. *National Parks Traveler* published [a review](#) of the book. Source: *National Parks Traveler*

- *Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace National Historic Site* - On August 25, the park reopened for public tours for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic. Site visits are by reservation. Source: [Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace National Historic Site](#)
- *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - The park has announced that it is initiating the development of a General Management Plan and the launch of a new park planning page. Public comments are not open yet, but will be starting later this fall. Source: [Valles Caldera National Preserve](#)
- *Virgin Islands National Park* - Virgin Islands Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach has stated that he will be meeting with the National Park Service to address long-standing issues related to access to private parcels within the park boundaries on St. John Island. Source: [St. John Source](#)
- *Voyageurs National Park* - The park recently hosted listening sessions about concerns from resort owners and residents about policing in the park. As a result of those sessions, Superintendent Bob DeGross released a list of action items for NPS staff to address the community's concerns, including more open communication and systems to allow boaters to avoid repeat stops for routine inspections or non-violation reasons. Local lawmakers State Representative Rob Ecklund (D) and State Senator Tom Bakk (I) have also sent a letter to the federal delegation asking for support in endorsing a civilian law enforcement review board. Source: [WDIO](#)
- *White Sands National Park* - On August 31, the park announced the application process for 2023 photography workshop Commercial Use Authorizations. Applications will be accepted starting on October 1. Source: [White Sands National Park](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - Theresa Pierno, the President and CEO of the National Parks Conservation Association, had [an op-ed](#) published in the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* that argues that the National Park Service should do a better job at telling the stories of Indigenous people in the parks. It cites some ongoing efforts in this direction, particularly Yellowstone's renaming of peaks, institution of a Tribal Heritage Center, and their "Yellowstone Revealed" commemoration this past week. Source: *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*
- *Yellowstone National Park* - NPS biologists have confirmed that the 1,000-year-flood that hit the park in June has created very little disturbance to wild fish populations in the park. Several barriers had previously been installed in watersheds in the park to restore native fish populations, and they withstood the flood event. Source: [Outdoor Life](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - The park will be making repairs and improvements to the

trail and stone staircases along the Mist Trail from August 29 through November 4. Part of the trail will be closed during the day on weekdays and will remain open on weekends. Source: [Sierra Sun Times](#)

- *Peace Corps Commemorative Park (pending NPS site)* - On September 1, the National Capital Planning Commission approved preliminary development plans for the park, which were submitted by the National Park Service, in collaboration with the Peace Corps Commemoration Foundation. The site will be located between Louisiana Avenue, 1st Street, and C Street, NW. *[See below for public commenting on the park, which is open until September 16.]* Source: [WJLA](#)

Personnel Changes

- *Wildland Fire Program* - Robert "Jim" Schultz has been selected as the new NPS Wildland Fire Operations Program leader. Jim has 24 years of interagency fire experience, including 14 years with the NPS, most recently as the Branch of Wildland Fire Qualifications and Training Program manager. Source: [National Park Service Wildland Fire Program](#)

Park People

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

Deceased

- Lynda Lou (Lewis) Appling, 73, passed away on July 15. She spent many years working in Yosemite National Park. Source: [Mariposa Gazette](#)
- Mary Amelia Bomar, 78, passed away on August 28. Mary was the 17th Director of the National Park Service, and also did stints as the Northeast Regional Director, superintendent at Independence National Historical Park, superintendent at Oklahoma City National Memorial, and roles at Rocky Mountain National Park, San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, and Amistad National Recreation Area. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- Rosalie M. Ems, 78, passed away on August 5. Rosalie worked for the National Park Service for several decades, and retired as the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area maintenance secretary. Source: Chris Nelson, [Dignity Memorial](#), [Pocono Record](#)
- Tyler Hudock, 37, passed away on August 23. Tyler worked at Padre Island National Seashore and Shenandoah National Park as a law enforcement ranger. Source: [GoLocalProv/ Avery-Storti Funeral Home](#)
- Michael "Mike" Little, 80, passed away on August 31. Mike worked at Wind Cave National Park, Colorado National Monument, and Arches National Park. Source:

[Morning Journal](#)

- Donald D. Nerdig, 75, passed away on August 4. Donald worked several summers at Fishing Bridge in Yellowstone National Park, and later managed the Fish Creek Campground at Glacier National Park. Source: [Whitefish Pilot](#)
- Jerry N. Olson, 79, passed away on July 18. Jerry and his wife Carol spent several summers as volunteer hosts in Yellowstone National Park and Acadia National Park. Source: [The Atascadero News](#)
- Robert "Bob" L. Palmer, 80, passed away on July 20. Bob worked as an interpretive ranger at Great Basin National Park, and after his retirement, he served on the board of the Great Basin National Park Foundation. Source: [Legacy/Elko Daily](#)
- Stanley "Buddy" Richardson Wade, Jr., 80, passed away on August 21. He worked for the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. as a fire protection officer. Source: [The Recorder](#)
- Albert "Al" Elwood Werking, 93, passed away on August 24. He worked for the NPS for 36 years, retiring as the Deputy Director of Training and Employee Development. Other stints included being a field naturalist at Blue Ridge Parkway, a management assistant at Scotts Bluff National Monument, a liaison between the NPS and Parks Canada, and a management instructor at the Mather Training Center. Source: [Herald-Mail Media](#)

In the News

- Jonathan Jarvis, former Director of the National Park Service, wrote [an article](#) published in *Bay Nature* about his efforts creating a greywater "laundry to landscape" irrigation system. Source: *Bay Nature*
- The *Penn-Trafford Star* published [an article](#) about Shaina Nicassio's work as the sustainability program specialist for ReImagine Turtle Creek Watershed and Airshed Communities. She worked previously as a botany and wildlife biological science technician for the NPS, and the interview touches on that experience. Source: *Penn-Trafford Star*
- *Travel Awaits* published [a blog post](#) called, "Retired National Park Rangers Share Their Top 8 Spots for Fall Camping". Retired NPS staff Marilyn Irwin, Phil Selleck, Rebecca Harriet, and Greg Jackson are quoted in the blog. Source: *Travel Awaits*

Open for Comment

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

- *Badlands National Park* - The NPS and Federal Aviation Administration are seeking public comments on an air tour management plan. [Comments](#) are open until

October 6. Source: [Badlands National Park](#)

- *Big Cypress National Preserve* - Public comment is now open on an updated Backcountry Access Plan and Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement. [Comments](#) are open until September 26. Source: [Big Cypress National Preserve](#)
- *Cuyahoga Valley National Park* - Public comment is now open on a Community Access Plan to enhance the visitor experience. [Comments](#) are open until September 16. Source: [Cuyahoga Valley National Park](#)
- *George Washington Memorial Parkway* - The NPS has issued a Request for Expression of Interest for creative ideas for re-envisioning the use of facilities adjacent to the Washington Sailing Marina on Daingerfield Island. The facility is 13,662 square feet and includes seating and a snack bar. Concept ideas may be [submitted](#) until September 19. Source: [George Washington Memorial Parkway](#)
- *Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve* - Public comment is now open for a marine management planning process, including consideration to changes in vessel quotas and operating requirements. [Comments](#) are open until September 9. Source: [Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Joshua Tree National Park* - Public comment is now open on a proposed wilderness permit system that will include camping zones, designated sites on high use trails, and mandatory permit check-ins. [Comments](#) are open until September 9. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Katmai National Park and Preserve* - Public comment is now open on a proposal to increase overnight camping at Brooks Campground, starting in 2023. [Comments](#) are open until September 30. Source: [Katmai National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Lassen Volcanic National Park* - Public comment is now open on a Design Concept Plan for the Manzanita Lake Area, including improvements to visitor facilities and rehabilitation of historic structures amidst growing visitation. [Comments](#) are open until September 26. Source: [Lassen Volcanic National Park](#)
- *Lincoln Home National Historic Site* - The NPS has announced a Request for Expressions of Interest for creative use of the Henson Robinson House for the future. Site visits will run through September 30 and [proposals](#) are open until November 3. Source: [Lincoln Home National Historic Site](#)
- *Mount Rushmore National Memorial* - The NPS and Federal Aviation Administration are seeking public comments on an air tour management plan. [Comments](#) are open until October 6. Source: [Mount Rushmore National Memorial](#)

- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - The NPS and Peace Corps Commemorative Foundation, in cooperation with the National Capital Planning Commission, have opened public comment on a proposed Peace Corps Commemorative Park one block north of the U.S. Capitol grounds. [Comments](#) are open until September 16. Source: [National Mall and Memorial Parks](#)
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - Public comment is now open on a proposal to increase fees at 14 frontcountry campgrounds, starting in 2023 and 2024. [Comments](#) are open until September 14. Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#)
- *Theodore Roosevelt National Park* - Public comment is now open on a Facility Revitalization Plan and Environmental Assessment. [Comments](#) are open until September 14. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Virgin Islands National Park* - Public comment is now open on an environmental assessment for a proposed land exchange between the park and the U.S. Virgin Islands government on St. John Island. The swap would trade the NPS-owned Catherineberg Estate for the territory-owned Whistling Cay in order to allow the local community an opportunity to construct the first public K-12 school on St. John. [Comments](#) are open until September 22. Source: [St. Thomas Source](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - Public comment is now open on a big wall climbing permitting system. [Comments](#) are open until November 13. Source: [Gear Junkie, Yosemite National Park](#)
- *President Street Station (Special Resource Study)* - The NPS is beginning a special resource study about President Street Station in Baltimore, which is associated with the history of the American railroad, Frederick Douglass' escape from slavery, a failed assassination attempt on President Lincoln, and the 1861 Baltimore Riot. It will evaluate its eligibility to be included in the National Park System. [Comments](#) are open until September 30. Source: [National Park Service Region 1](#)

Other Department of the Interior News

- *\$28.2 million to Klamath Basin restoration* - On August 22, the Department of the Interior announced \$16 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding has been allocated for Klamath Basin ecosystem restoration projects and \$10 million to expand the Klamath Falls National Fish Hatchery. The Bureau of Reclamation, in collaboration with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, will give \$2.2 million for 10 grants for further restoration in the Klamath and Trinity Rivers. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$15.8 million for Delaware River Watershed* - On August 25, the Department of the Interior announced \$15.8 million in U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and William Penn Foundation funds for 45 grants that will go through the Delaware Watershed

Conservation Fund and Delaware River Restoration Fund to improve runoff, agricultural conservation practices, wetland restoration, tree planting, and opening fish passages. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

- *DOI attends World Water Week* - Interior Department Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Tanya Trujillo attended the World Water Week international conference in Stockholm, Switzerland last week, sharing the U.S.' efforts at adapting to water shortages and climate extremes. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Orphaned well grants awarded* - On August 25, the Department of the Interior announced it has awarded \$560 million to 24 states to begin plugging, capping, and reclaiming orphaned oil and gas wells through funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *New DOI appointees* - On August 29, the Department of the Interior announced five new appointees: Perrin Cooke, Oversight Counsel in the Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs, Courtney Fogwell, Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Jim Guthrie, Senior Advisor to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Chloe Leaverton, Special Assistant to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Celeste Zumwalt, Briefing Book Coordinator to the Office of the Secretary. 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.

There were no new public laws, nor actions taken by the Senate or House due to the annual August recess.

Incidents

Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.

Big Bend National Park

Heavy storms

On September 3, heavy rains across the park led to damage to several popular attractions. A section of switchbacks on the Lost Mine Trail collapsed, and high water and debris crossed Ross Maxwell Scenic Drive south of the Mule Ears Overlook. Both the trail and road are closed, as well as the Cottonwood Campground, which is now inaccessible. No one was injured during these incidents. Crews are assessing and stabilizing the trail and road before they can be reopened. Source: [Big Bend National Park](#)

Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site

Drainage issues close bridge

On August 9, the park closed Front Lake Bridge due to drainage issues with the historic dam the bridge is built on. The bridge may take several months to resolve, and the park is now offering shuttle service from the main parking lot to the Sandburg Home and goat farm. Source: [Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site](#)

Chiricahua National Monument

Rockfall

On August 23, the park closed Bonita Canyon Drive beyond the Bonita Canyon Campground due to rockfall and treefall on the road from monsoon rains. Due to ongoing predicted weather events, the road is closed until conditions improve significantly. Source: [Chiricahua National Monument](#)

Grand Canyon National Park

Fall from rim

On August 26, a 44-year-old fell from the North Rim, off-trail west of the Bright Angel Point Trail. The individual was found deceased 200 feet below the rim. Their body was recovered by a technical ropes team of NPS personnel. An investigation is being conducted by the NPS and Coconino County Medical Examiner's Office. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

Grand Canyon National Park

Bats test positive for rabies

On August 29, the park announced that a bat collected on the Colorado River in mid-August has tested positive for rabies. They have advised visitors to give bats a safe distance and to seek medical treatment if they come into physical contact with a bat. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

Grand Canyon National Park

Major pipeline break

On September 3, the park re-implemented mandatory water conservation measures on both the North and South Rims of the park due to a major pipeline break along the North Kaibab Trail. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

Grand Canyon National Park

Backpacker fatality

On September 4, a 59-year-old backpacker on a multi-day backpacking trip became disoriented and then unconscious along the Thunder River Trail, approximately 1 mile from the confluence of Tapeats Creek and the Colorado River. Members of their group unsuccessfully attempted to resuscitate the individual. The cause of death is under

investigation. The park stated that temperatures in the inner canyon that day were between 100 and 115 degrees. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

Haleakalā National Park

Helicopter rescue

On September 7, a group of four family members made a call to report a medical emergency happening to a nine-year-old at the Paliku Cabin, which is located 9.3 miles from the trailhead. An NPS fire helicopter was able to transport all four to a landing zone at Hosmer Grove, and the individual was transported to Maui Memorial Medical Center.

Source: [Maui News](#)

Lake Mead National Recreation Area

Drowning

On September 2, a 44-year-old, who was not wearing a personal flotation device, was observed in distress while attempting to swim back to his boat near the Cottonwood Cove of Lake Mohave. Observers tried to throw multiple flotation devices to the individual, but the individual slipped under the water. The NPS dive team responded, but had to suspend the search that evening due to high winds. The individual's body was found the following morning by the dive team. Source: [Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)

Mammoth Cave National Park

Helicopter crash

On September 5, a helicopter crash occurred just inside the park's southern boundary. The 69-year-old pilot had been flying alone from St. Louis, Missouri to Knoxville, Tennessee before contact was lost with the aircraft. NPS staff, along with Barren and Glasgow County Emergency Management, Edmonson County Emergency Management, and Kentucky State Police conducted a search, utilizing eyewitness reports and the last known location. A search helicopter was able to locate the downed helicopter, and after arriving on scene, the pilot was found deceased. The cause of the crash is under investigation by the NPS and National Traffic Safety Board. Source: [Mammoth Cave National Park](#)

Mojave National Preserve

Further flooding

On August 26, the park experienced heavy rains and flash flooding in the park, which damaged several paved roads, including portions of Black Canyon Road and South Kelbaker Road. These floods further compound damage sustained during heavy floods on July 31. Visitors at the Hole-in-the-Wall Campground were stranded temporarily until staff could make temporary repairs to allow them to depart the park safely. At least one vehicle became trapped in a wash after traveling into a closed area on Kelbaker Road. As of August 26, Cima Road, Kelso Cima Road, Kelbaker Road, Ivanpah Road, Morning Star

Road, Essex Road, Essex Road, Black Canyon Road, and the Mojave Road are closed for assessment, repair, and clean-up. Source: [Mojave National Preserve](#)

Mount Rainier National Park

Climber fall results in death

On August 22, a 52-year-old climber was observed taking a "substantial fall" while descending the Disappointment Cleaver route on Mount Rainier. The individual was on a private, unguided trip with friends. Guides from International Mountain Guides and Rainier Mountaineering, Inc, and NPS rangers made several attempts to find the individual that day, but could not locate them. The follow day, a team of NPS staff located the individual, who was deceased. An NPS-contracted helicopter was utilized to access and retrieve the victim's body. Source: [Mount Rainier National Park](#)

National Mall and Memorial Parks

Homeless encampment removed

On August 24, the NPS removed homeless encampments at Reservation 70 (Massachusetts Ave and 9th St NW) and Reservation 175 (K St and 9th St NW) due to threats to public health and safety. Park staff intend to rehabilitate turf, clean the area, and remove a rodent infestation. The area is closed by temporary fencing while the area is restored. Source: [WUSA9](#)

North Cascades

Wildfires close trails

On August 23, multiple fires were ignited by storms through the Chilliwack area. The northwestern corner of the park is currently closed. As of September 6, the fires were estimated at 3,700 acres. Firefighters are working to protect the Copper Lookout and adjacent areas. Source: [Seattle Times](#), North Cascades National Park ([8/24](#), [8/27](#), [9/6](#))

Olympic National Park

Visitor dies after jumping off cliff

On August 23, a 43-year-old jumped off a 40-foot cliff at "Devil's Punchbowl" on Lake Crescent. The individual landed in the water and then was unable to climb out on the rocky shoreline. The individual went under the water and never resurfaced. Patrol boats and a dive team from the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe Public Safety and Natural Resource dive team searched the area and were able to locate the victim's body four hours later. The incident is under investigation by the NPS. Source: [KOMO News](#), [Olympic National Park](#)

Olympic National Park

Backpacker killed by tree fall

On August 30, a tree fell on a tent occupied by a 34-year-old at a backcountry campsite at Elk Lake. A visitor notified emergency services via a satellite device. NPS staff utilized a helicopter the next morning to transfer the victim's body to the Jefferson County Coroner's Office. Source: [Olympic National Park](#)

Rocky Mountain National Park

Vehicle falls 500-feet down slope

On September 1, a small SUV with one occupant drove off Trail Ridge Road, east of Gore Range Overlook, coming to rest 500 feet down the steep slope. A visitor traveling on the road saw the car and reported it to authorities. The driver, a 54-year-old, was able to walk to the road with assistance from NPS staff and the Estes Valley Fire Protection District, and was transported out of the park by the Estes Park Health ambulance. The road was closed for two hours for the rescue of the driver, and then again the following day for four hours to extract the vehicle and debris. The incident is under investigation. Source: [Rocky Mountain National Park](#)

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

Mountain lion killed by vehicle

On August 26, a 2-year-old mountain lion known as "P-90" was struck and killed by a vehicle on California State Highway 33 in Oak View, just south of Ojai. Biologists from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife picked up the individual's body. It is the 32nd mountain lion killed by a vehicle in the park in the last 20 years. Source: [Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area Facebook page](#)

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks

Bear hit by car

On August 23, a black bear was struck by a vehicle and killed near Cedar Grove. California Fish and Wildlife officials responded. It is unknown if any visitors were hurt. Source: [Sacramento Bee](#)

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks

Hiker missing

On August 21, a 66-year-old individual became separated from their hiking group while hiking near the base of Split Mountain. The group intended to hike to the summit and return to the trailhead the same day. The individual was reported missing on August 22. The search has included ground searchers, canines, infrared imaging, drones, and trail investigation from personnel from the NPS, Inyo County Sheriffs Department, Inyo National Forest, Inyo County Search and Rescue, California National Guard, Sierra Madre Search and Rescue, the Airforce Rescue Coordination Center, Tulare County Sheriffs Department, and Yosemite National Park. On September 1, the park scaled the search back to "limited continuous mode", which means that the search personnel was reduced.

Source: Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks ([8/30](#), [9/1](#))

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore River diverted

Between August 14-15, the Platte River was illegally diverted into a new channel. The NPS' Investigative Services Branch is looking for any information the public may have about this diversion. Source: [Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore](#)

Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River 2 Drownings

On August 27, a family group was rafting, when two individuals decided to go for a swim. Neither wore a personal flotation device. The individuals were seen in distress, and one individual was rescued, while the other was seen going under the water. NPS staff, the West End Dive Team, and Lumberland Ambulance responded. The individual who went under was found deceased.

On September 3, a group of family and friends entered the river to swim. An individual, who was not wearing a personal flotation device, entered the main channel, where the current is swift with steep drop offs. The individual was observed in distress, and bystanders attempted to help, but the individual was observed going under the water. NPS staff and emergency crews from the Yuland, Shoholda, and Sparrowbush Fire Departments responded to the scene, as well as the Sullivan County Dive Task Force and the Matamoras Dive Team. The individual who went under was found deceased. Source: Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River ([8/28](#), [9/4](#))

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Plane crash

On September 3, a Cessna 180 landed poorly at the Jakes Bar airstrip due to a gusting tail wind, striking a large rock and flipping over. The pilot and passenger sustained only bruises, and were able to stay the night in a public use cabin near the airstrip with the rations they had with them. A friend picked them up the following day and transported them back to Anchorage. Wrangell Mountain Air was able to fly to the site to provide information on the location of the aircraft for future salvaging. It was the fourth aircraft accident in the park this year. Source: [Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve](#)

Yosemite National Park Famed climber accused of sexual assault

On August 29, a 38-year-old who is a well-known professional rock climber was arrested and charged with committing sexual assault in the park over two days in August 2016. Source: [SFGate](#)

Yellowstone National Park

Mudslide

On August 24, a mudslide just outside the East Entrance of the park shut down the road for several hours. The road is now open. Source: [NBC Montana](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Carlsbad Caverns National Park* - Due to the flash flooding that occurred on August 20 (see [8/24/22 Coalition Report](#)), the park closed all wilderness areas and backcountry trails on August 25 for assessment and repairs. They also reported that Walnut Canyon Desert Drive has sustained major damage and it is unknown when repairs will begin. Source: [Carlsbad Caverns National Park](#)
- *Death Valley National Park* - The National Weather Service has classified August 5, 2022 as the park's rainiest day in history. Highway 190, Dantes View, Badwater Road (from 190 to Badwater), and Artists Drive are the only roads open in the park currently. The Federal Highways Administration has issued a contract to clear debris and fill in road gaps on Beatty Cutoff Road, North Highway, Badwater Road (from Badwater to Shoshone), and Mud Canyon Road. No timeline is yet available for road openings. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - As of September 4, the Quartz was 1,698 acres, 0% contained, with 35 personnel assigned. Closures in the area continue. Source: [Inciweb](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - The closures in effect due to the Dragon Fire, which began on July 17, have now been lifted. Tiyo Point, the Outlet Canyon backcountry use area, and Widforss Forest Trail are all now open. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - The human remains found on May 7 at Callville Bay (see [5/18/22 Coalition Report](#)) have been identified as a 42-year-old who reportedly drowned on August 2, 2022. Identification was made using DNA analysis, and the evidence corroborates a witness report made to rangers on that date, saying that a person without a personal flotation device was seen swimming and struggling in that area.

On August 17, a gun was found in a dried out section of the lake adjacent to where other human remains were found in a barrel on May 1 (see [5/4/22 Coalition Report](#)). It has not yet been determined whether the gun is connected to those remains. Source: [Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#), [The New York Times](#)

- *Yellowstone National Park* - On August 31, the park stopped requiring day-use tickets to drive the corridor between Tower Junction and Slough Creek. The road is

now open for any visitors for day use, though closures on nearby trails and the roadway past Slough Creek remain in place due to damage from the historic floods in June 2022. The park has also released new photos and video of the ongoing road repairs. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

- *Yosemite National Park* - As of September 5, the Red Fire was 5,518 acres. Trails from Glacier Point to Merced Pass Lake in the Illilouette drainage are currently closed. The Rodgers Fire was 2,368 acres. A segment of trail in the Rodgers Canyon area from Neall Lake to the junction with Table Lake is currently closed. A new fire was also discovered on September 4, northeast of Aspen Valley. As of September 5, the Aspen Fire was 19 acres and being fully suppressed. Source: [Yosemite National Park](#)
- *Zion National Park* - The 29-year-old who went missing after a hike in the Narrows during a flash flood was found deceased on August 22 in the Virgin River near Court of the Patriarchs, about six miles south of the Narrows. Source: [NBC News](#)

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 Hellmann
- Issue Contributors: Chris Nelson, Bill Walters

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

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The Coalition is a non-profit organization of past and current NPS employees and their allies that "studies, educates, speaks, and acts for the preservation and protection of the National Park System and mission-related programs of the National Park Service."

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