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The Coalition Report

Wednesday, August 21, 2024

Coalition Actions

The Coalition provided detailed [comments](#) on Grand Teton National Park's request for input on desired conditions and visitor experiences.

Coalition Executive Committee Chair Phil Francis was quoted in a *National Parks Traveler* [article](#) and [podcast](#) discussing the Great American Outdoors Act

The Coalition sent [a letter](#) to the President supporting designation of the Frances Perkins Homestead as a national monument.

We issued [a press release](#) thanking the President for the designation of the 1908 Springfield Race Riot National Monument (official White House press release below).

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.

- *New national monument* - On August 16, President Joe Biden established Springfield 1908 Race Riot National Monument in Illinois. It is the 431st unit of the National Park Service. The new site includes 1.57 acres of federal land, donated by the City of Springfield and St. John's Hospital of the Hospital Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, with support from the National Park Foundation. The

site includes the foundations of five houses destroyed in the riots. The boundary of the park encompasses additional lands that may be donated to the NPS in the future. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)

- *2024 Challenge Cost Share Awards* - On August 8, the NPS and the National Park Trust announced \$361,000 in Challenge Cost Share funding for 17 projects that connect local communities with local parks. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *NPS can't hire fast enough* - A recent report by the Office of the Inspector General found that the NPS may not be able to take advantage of \$500 million in Inflation Reduction Act Funding to bolster hiring before funding expires in Fiscal Year 2030 due to "a lack of hiring flexibilities." It takes "several months to a year" to onboard new employees, and housing shortages continue to hinder NPS recruitment. Source: [Government Executive](#)
- *NPS is "most favorable" of federal agencies* - A new poll by Pew Research asked 9,400 members of the public for their feelings on 16 federal agencies. The National Park Service ranked the highest, with 76% of respondents giving it a favorable rating and 7% unfavorable. The IRS ranked the lowest, with 50% negative and 38% positive responses. Source: [FEDweek](#)
- *Rock climbing anchors in wilderness* - *National Public Radio* published [a 3-minute piece](#) on its "Morning Edition" show about the the different perspectives surrounding whether or not rock climbing bolts should be allowed in federally-designated wilderness areas. Source: *National Public Radio*
- *NPS interns at World Eskimo Indian Olympics* - Two NPS interns working in Tribal Relations, Deja Jackson and Charlee Korthuis, attended the World Eskimo Indian Olympics in July. While there, they interviewed participants and attendees about the importance of the games and its efforts to preserve Native Alaskan traditions. Profiles from those interviews are [posted](#) on the NPS' Office of Communications website. Source: National Park Service Office of Communications

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *American Battlefield Protection Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On August 8, the NPS awarded \$456,935 in Battlefield Restoration Grants for two projects in North Carolina and South Carolina that will restore Civil War battlefields. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - On October 1, the parkway will institute an updated fee structure for Special Use Permits. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)

- *Buffalo National River* - On August 12, the park began renovations to the Lower Tyler Bend River Access, including removing damage, constructing a loop between the entrance road and parking area, and the relocation of the restroom and associated utilities. The deconstruction phase will last through November. At that point, the construction phase will begin. The access point will be closed for the duration of the project. Source: [Buffalo National River](#)
- *Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site* - On October 1, the park will begin design and engineering for a project to repair the Front Lake dam, which failed in August 2022 due to aging and pipe decay. Construction is expected to begin in mid-2025. Source: [WLOS](#)
- *Cedar Breaks National Monument* - On August 22, the park will open a brand-new visitor contact station. The project was funded by the NPS' Centennial Challenge Program, the Zion National Park Forever Project, and Iron County (UT). The former information station, a 1937 historic cabin, "will now focus on the area's human history with a self-guided interpretive area." Source: [Cedar Breaks National Monument](#)
- *Channel Islands National Park* - On August 10, NPS Director Chuck Sams joined the Chumash Indian community on their annual traditional 24-mile paddle across the Santa Barbara Channel to Santa Cruz Island. The crossing is supported by the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, the Barbareño Chumash Tribal Council, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration at the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, and the NPS. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Cuyahoga Valley National Park* - On August 15, the Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park received the largest gift in its history, a \$3.8 million estate gift from the late James H. Hower. It is designated for the maintenance and improvement of the Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath Trail in the park. Source: [PR Newswire](#)
- *Death Valley National Park* - On August 16, the park announced that it has completed the environmental review to replace the Salt Creek Boardwalk, which was destroyed in a flash flood in August 2022, then further damaged by Hurricane Hilary flooding in 2023. The Federal Highway Administration will put the project out to bid soon, and construction is expected to take place from Fall 2024 through Spring 2025. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)
- *Gettysburg National Military Park* - On December 7, the park will proctor its Tier-1 Written Exam, which is the first step for individuals to becoming licensed battlefield guides at the park. Registration opened on August 19 and will close on September 7. Source: [Gettysburg National Military Park](#)

- *Grand Canyon National Park* - On August 12, the park announced the selection of Explor South Rim, LLC, as the new concessioner for bicycle rentals, guided bicycle tours, and some food and beverage on the South Rim. The contract begins on January 1, 2025, and will last 10 years. The company is a subsidiary of ExplorUS, a concessioner at a number of national and state parks. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - The *Citizen Times* published [an article](#) about a bird monitoring project in the park, coordinated through the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont. The program recently documented the presence of a female Kentucky warbler, the first one ever recorded at the site. Source: *Citizen Times*
- *Katahdin Woods and Water National Monument* - On August 17, Tekakapimək, the park's first visitor center, opened. It is located at the southeastern corner of the park. The \$31 million project was a collaborative effort between the NPS, Tribes of the Wabanaki Confederacy, Friends of Katahdin Woods and Waters, and the Elliottsville Foundation. Source: [The County](#)
- *Land and Water Conservation Fund Stateside Assistance Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On August 8, the Department of the Interior announced the distribution of \$325 million from the program to all 50 states, U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia, the largest annual distribution since its inception in 1979. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Minute Man National Historical Park* - On September 3, the park will begin a trail improvement project on both sides of Concord's North Bridge. Trail closures will be in place. The project is expected to take about eight weeks. It is part of a \$27 million multi-year project funded by the Great American Outdoors Act to repair historic structures and landscapes in the park in preparation for the 250th anniversary of the opening battle of the American Revolution in April 2025. Source: [Minute Man National Historical Park](#)
- *Mississippi National River and Recreation Area* - On August 14, the City of Saint Paul, in collaboration with the Great River Passage Conservancy, Mississippi Park Connection, and NPS, announced the selection of an architecture firm, VJAA, landscape architects from TEN x TEN, and Tribal consulting through Full Circle Indigenous Design to complete the design and construction documents for the future Mississippi River Learning Center. The building will serve as the headquarters for the NPS unit, as well as a multi-agency space for environmental and cultural learning. Design and construction bid documents are expected to be ready by December 2025. Source: [Saint Paul, Minnesota](#)
- *National Heritage Area System* (an NPS-administered program) - On August 13, the NPS delivered the Kentucky Wildlands National Heritage Area Feasibility Study to

Congress, identifying it as eligible for inclusion in the NHA System. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)

- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - On August 15, construction began on a project to replace sinking seawalls around the Tidal Basin and along the Potomac River in West Potomac Park. The \$113 million project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. The Tidal Basin portion is expected to be complete in Spring 2026, and the Potomac River section is scheduled to be complete in Winter 2026. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *National Natural Landmarks* (an NPS-administered program) - On August 9, Independence Creek Preserve in western Texas was designated as the newest National Natural Landmark. The property is managed by The Nature Conservancy. It is the 605th designated national natural landmark. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* (an NPS-administered program) - On August 9, the NPS announced \$3 million in grants to 13 Tribes and 21 museums to assist in the consultation, documentation, and repatriation of ancestral remains and cultural items in accordance with NAGPRA. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership* (an NPS-administered program) - The Department of the Interior announced the award of \$46.7 million for the redevelopment of creation of ten local parks in ten states. The program was established in 2014 and is funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Padre Island National Seashore* - The park received \$7.1 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding to restore abandoned oil and gas well sites within its boundaries. Source: [Padre Island National Seashore](#)
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - On July 8, an NPS volunteer discovered an active western snowy plover nest on Drakes Spit, its first since the 1980s. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had previously designated the area as important habitat for the threatened plover's recovery. Three chicks were banded for future monitoring. Source: [National Park Service San Francisco Bay Area Inventory and Monitoring Network](#)
- *Theodore Roosevelt National Park* - The park recently announced that the South Unit 48-mile scenic loop may finish a repair this fall on the four-mile stretch that "slid down a steep embankment" in 2019. If weather impedes progress, it will be complete in Spring 2025. The project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [News from the States](#)

- *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - The park, in collaboration with the New Mexico Gas Company, has started the third and final phase of decommissioning the retired natural gas pipeline that crosses the northern part of the park. The pipeline was retired in 2022. Funding for the project comes from the New Mexico Gas Company. The pipeline corridor will be closed to visitor use to allow new vegetation to grow. The NPS is working on a trail reroute for 2025. Source: [Los Alamos Daily Post](#)

Personnel Changes

- *Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument, Freedom Riders National Monument* - Rolando Herts was recently selected as the new superintendent. Rolando served the last 10 years as the director of The Delta Center for Culture and Learning and executive director of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area. He will begin his new role on September 9. Source: [Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument](#)
- *Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park* - Edward "Ed" Wenschhof has been selected as the new deputy superintendent. Ed has many years of NPS experience, most recently at the chief of visitor and resource protection at Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. Source: [Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park](#)
- *National Park Service Headquarters* - Charles Cuvelier was selected to join senior leadership at the Washington Office as the new associate director for visitor and resource protection. Charles has 32 years of NPS experience, most recently as the superintendent of George Washington Memorial Parkway. Source: [Alexandria Gazette Packet](#)
- *Smokies Life* - On August 7, Smokies Life, the philanthropic partner of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, announced the hiring of Jacqueline "Jacki" Harp as the organization's new chief executive officer. Jacki worked for REI Co-op for 18 years, and is on the board of TennGreen Land Conservancy and Lookout Mountain Conservancy. She begins her new role on September 11. Source: [Smokies Life](#)

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

- David Nash Denham, 77, passed away on August 2. David worked for the NPS for a time at the Home of Franklin D Roosevelt National Historic Site and at the Statue of Liberty National Monument. Source: [Dimpleby Funeral Homes, Inc.](#)
- Richard "Rich" Douglas Harned, 87, passed away on August 13. Rich worked for

the NPS for many years, "recruiting underrepresented students for positions in national parks." He retired from the NPS in 1994. Source: [Legacy/San Francisco Chronicle](#)

- David Louis Sauvageau, 91, passed away on July 29. David spent a summer working in Yellowstone National Park after graduating from high school. Source: [KBZK](#)
- Debra Partenheimer Turner, 65, passed away on August 16. Debra worked for the NPS for many years, including at Grand Teton National Park and Bryce Canyon National Park. Source: [Legacy/Strickland Funeral Home](#)
- Jan Kazimierz Turzanski, 91, passed away on August 8. Jan worked as "a naturalist for the summer at Acadia National Park" from 1973 to 1985. Source: [Williamsport Sun-Gazette](#)

Open for Comment

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

- *Anacostia Park* - Public comment is [open through August 30](#) on revised design concepts for the park, including better transportation access, flood resilience, and visitor amenities. Source: [Anacostia Park](#)
- *Arches National Park* - Public comment is [open through September 17](#) on a floodplain statement of findings for proposed construction of bridges over three low-water crossings on the Delicate Arch Road. Source: [Arches National Park](#)
- *Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Curecanti National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through September 20](#) on a grazing management plan for the two co-managed parks. Grazing is currently administered through special use permits and interagency agreements with the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service. Source: [Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park](#)
- *Buffalo National River* - Public comment is [open through September 15](#) on a draft river management plan. Source: Buffalo National River
- *Chiricahua National Monument* - Public comment is [open through August 30](#) on an Accessibility Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. Source: [Chiricahua National Monument](#)
- *Cumberland Gap National Historical Park* - Public comment is open via email or postal mail through September 4 on a proposal to increase fees on guided tours, picnic shelter rentals, and the Wilderness Road Campground. Source: [Cumberland Gap National Historical Park](#)

- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through September 9](#) on a plan to increase camping fees at Lees Ferry Campground. Source: [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#)
- *Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument* - The NPS and Bureau of Land Management have [opened public comment through September 9](#) on a plan to remove several hundred wild burros currently residing "within and outside the Tassi-Gold Butte Herd Management Area." All burros would be removed, examined by a veterinarian, and made available for adoption or sale. Source: [Bureau of Land Management Arizona Strip District Office](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - Public comment is [open through August 21](#) on the construction of nine miles of new parkway from Wears Valley to the Gatlinburg Spur (the Foothills Parkway Section 8D). Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)
- *Historic Context Study and Survey Report of Great River Road* - Public comment is [open through August 30](#) on the study, which would determine an 11-mile eastern Louisiana corridor's eligibility for potential National Historic Landmark district designation. Source: [Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve](#)
- *John P. Parker House Special Resource Study* - Public comment is [open through September 8](#) on a Congressionally-mandated special resource study of the home of abolitionist and entrepreneur John P. Parker to evaluate its potential as an NPS site. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Olympic National Park* - Public comment is [open through August 31](#) on an Accessibility Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. Source: [Olympic National Park](#)
- *Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve* - Public comment is [open through August 26](#) on a Kennecott Mines National Historic Landmark Management Strategy. Source: [Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - Public comment is [open through September 30](#) on a visitor access management plan. Source: [Yosemite National Park](#)

Other Department of the Interior News

- *New wildlife refuge* - On August 13, the Department of the Interior announced the establishment of the 600-acre Willamette Valley Conservation Area in Oregon. It is the 572nd unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and the 15th conservation area in the system. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *State of Maine secures wind research lease* - On August 19, the Department of the Interior announced its first "floating offshore wind energy research lease." The lease

area includes a little less than 15,000 acres located 28 nautical miles offshore of Maine on the U.S. Continental Shelf. As a research lease, the State of Maine or its designated operator will propose and conduct research regarding the environmental and engineering aspects of the project, which could include up to 12 floating wind turbines. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

- *Wind lease sale* - On August 14, the Department of the Interior announced two winning bids for offshore wind energy lease auctions, located offshore of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. They netted \$92.65 million. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Orphaned well funding* - On August 14, the Department of the Interior announced \$775 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure funding to clean up orphaned oil and gas wells in 21 states. 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 of legislative and congressional affairs for the National Park Service, and Chris Soller, former superintendent of Fire Island National Seashore and legislative specialist for the National Park Service.

There is nothing to report this week, as the House and Senate were on their August recess and only met in pro forma sessions on August 6, 9, 13, and 16.

Incidents

Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.

Bandelier National Monument

Rabies

A dead bat was found in the Cottonwood Picnic area on July 7. It later tested positive for rabies. It is the first confirmed rabies case this year in northern New Mexico. No human contact with the bat has been reported. Source: [New Mexico Department of Health](#)

Buck Island Reef National Monument, Christiansted National Historic Site, Salt River Bay National Historical Park, Virgin Islands National Park

Hurricane

On August 12, the parks closed in preparation for Hurricane Ernesto. At Virgin Islands National Park, staff began assessing and mitigating storm damage on August 14. They have concluded that "the clean-up process may take a little longer than estimated to restore the park fully to a pre-storm state." The Cruz Bay Visitor Center and bookstore and the Trunk Bay Fee Station reopened on August 16. Source: [Christiansted National Historic Site](#), Virgin Islands National Park ([8/12](#), [8/15](#))

Buffalo National River

Printed material distribution

On July 28, an individual, recently elected as the Marion County (AR) Justice of Peace, was issued a citation for the distribution of printed material. The infraction is listed in the 36 Code of Federal Regulations as requiring a special use permit to ensure the "overall safety and enjoyment of the historic site by the majority of visitors." The individual was handing out leaflets "to inform campers and floaters of the legal limitations of National Park Service park rangers outside the river boundaries and the contact information needed to file a complaint if they are 'treated with disrespect or in an unprofessional manner' by park personnel." The leaflet also documented information about a ranger-involved death in 2017. Source: [Newton County Times](#)

Cape Hatteras National Seashore

House collapse

On August 16, an unoccupied house collapsed onto the beach in Rodanthe, NC. It is the seventh house collapse in the park over the past four years. On August 17, cleanup efforts began, and they are expected to take several days. Several other houses also "appear to have sustained damages in the Rodanthe area." The park, in coordination with Dare County (NC), is "conducting a detailed assessment of debris and hazards associated with damaged structures in Rodanthe." Public entry from the northern boundary of Rodanthe to the northern end of Jug Handle Bridge is closed, and visitors are urged to avoid beaches and the surf in the area. Visitors are also advised to not enter the water around the Village of Buxton due to the possibility of compromised septic systems. Source: Cape Hatteras National Seashore ([8/16](#), [8/18](#))

Death Valley National Park

Vehicle fires (separate incidents)

On August 11, a fifth wheel travel trailer ignited on fire as it descended Towne Pass on CA-190. The driver and passenger saved their pickup truck by unhooking it from the burning trailer. They attempted to put the fire out with fire extinguishers. An off-duty NPS staff member reported the fire. Due to a shortage of employees with firefighting certification, they called for outside units from the San Bernardino County (CA) Fire Protection District, Mojave National Preserve, California Highway Patrol, Caltrans, and the Bureau of Land Management. The trailer was destroyed completely. The driver and passenger stated that they believe a propane issue near the refrigerator started the fire. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)

On August 15, a delivery truck ignited on fire while driving on CA-190 near Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes. It is believed that overheated brakes started the fire. Personnel from the NPS, Beatty Volunteer Fire Department, Caltrans, and California Highway Patrol responded to the incident. The driver was not injured in the incident. The truck "burned to

the ground." It is the fourth vehicle fire in the park in just over a month. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)

Death Valley National Park

Heat fatality

On August 1, a 57-year-old hiked the one-mile Natural Bridge Trail in the afternoon. Other visitors noticed the individual stumble upon their return to the parking lot and offered to help. The individual declined, and the bystanders said that their "responses did not make sense." The individual got into their car and drove off a steep 20-foot embankment at the edge of the parking lot. The car rolled over and the airbags deployed. A bystander left to call 911, while other bystanders helped the individual walk back to the parking lot and into some shade. The bystanders said the individual stopped breathing just before NPS staff arrived. The park staff started CPR and moved the individual into an air-conditioned ambulance. The individual passed away in the ambulance. An autopsy by the Inyo County (CA) Coroner found that the individual died of hyperthermia. The park was recorded as 119F that day. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)

Death Valley National Park

4 calls for assistance in one afternoon

On August 13, a concession employee began hiking from Panamint Springs Resort at 4 AM. They crossed Panamint Valley, climbed Panamint Butte's West Face, and summited around noon. After looking at a map, they decided to descend through a canyon, but eventually came to a place that would require rappelling, and they did not have technical gear. They re-ascended, then descended the route they had climbed earlier in the day. At about 4:30 PM, the individual ran out of water. They lost consciousness for a brief amount of time and slid down a scree slope. They eventually woke up, found themselves bruised, and called for a rescue via satellite device around 6 PM. A helicopter from Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake was dispatched, but delayed by technical difficulties. They were eventually able to respond and rescued the hiker at about 11:15 PM.

That same day...

...an individual reported their spouse overdue after failing to return from a drive to Badwater in the planned amount of time. Inyo County (CA) Sheriff's deputies began searching the area, and the missing individual eventually was able to contact their spouse that they were safe.

...an individual planned a one-hour hike at Mosaic Canyon, but after five hours had passed, had still not returned. Their family reported them overdue. Shortly after calling for help, the overdue individual reached cell phone coverage and called their family.

...an individual got into a car accident near milepost 18 on North Highway. They received a ride with other park visitors, who called in the accident. Park staff met up with the individual along North Highway, evaluated their medical condition, then gave them "a

courtesy non-ambulance transport to Pahrump, NV." Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)

Gettysburg National Military Park

Vandalism

Some time between February 13 and 19, vandalism was committed "in the northern section of the battlefield at the Benner barn." The park is looking for any information the public can provide. No further details were released. Source: [Gettysburg National Military Park](#)

Gettysburg National Military Park

Stolen artifacts

Between December 2023 and January 2024, artifacts were taken from a historical site known as the Timbers farm, on the southern end of the battlefield. The park is looking for any information the public can provide. No further details were released. Source: [Gettysburg National Military Park](#)

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area

Arch collapse

A popular arch in Rock Creek Bay known as Double Arch (as well as "Toilet Bowl," "Crescent Pool," and "Hole in the Roof") collapsed on August 8. No injuries were reported from the collapse. The feature eroded, likely hastened by changing water levels and erosion from wave action. Source: [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#)

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area

Lightning strike

On August 12, lightning struck a 22-year-old and 23-year-old standing near the rim of Horseshoe Bend. Personnel from the NPS, Classic Air Medical, and the City of Page (AZ) Fire Department responded. Both individuals "sustained injuries." They both were flown to St. George Regional Hospital in Utah by Classic Air. Source: [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#)

Grand Canyon National Park

Missing person found deceased

On August 3, a 20-year-old entered the park and went missing. The park began a multi-day search for the individual. On August 6, NPS staff located the individual 150 feet below the rim at Twin Overlooks along Desert View Drive. The individual's body was recovered utilizing technical rope rescue techniques, the team's third in a week. The NPS and Coconino County (AZ) Medical Examiner are investigating the incident. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

Grand Teton National Park

Reckless driving, elk fatality

On May 10 at 9:30 PM, during a time of high roadside visitation to watch the aurora borealis, a 58-year-old drove at speeds of up to 127 miles per hour in areas where the speed limit is 45 MPH. They struck and killed an elk, continued driving a few miles, then abandoned the vehicle near the Gros Ventre Campground before obtaining a ride out of the park. The individual pleaded guilty to reckless driving, speeding, failing to notify authorities of a motor vehicle accident, and impermissibly removing a motor vehicle from the scene of an accident. They were recently sentenced to three days of incarceration, and \$1,820 in fines and court costs. Source: [Cap City News](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Vehicle fatality

On August 17, a vehicle crash took place on Foothills Parkway, resulting in one fatality. The Tennessee Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. No other details were released. Source: [WATE](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Bear "stalks" hikers

On August 11, two hikers encountered a bear near the intersection of the Dry Sluice Gap Trail and Grassy Branch. It began to follow them. They used bear spray and threw sticks and rocks at the bear, but it continued to follow them. They called 911. NPS staff met the hikers on trail and escorted them to their vehicles. The bear "remains at large." The Cabin Flats Trail, Dry Sluice Gap Trail, and Grassy Branch Trail have been closed for public safety. Source: [The Charlotte Observer](#)

Greenbelt Park

Stabbing

On August 12, a 38-year-old was killed via stabbing at Greenbelt Park. Later that day, a 63-year-old was arrested and charged with murder in relation to the incident. The investigation is ongoing. Source: [U.S. Park Police](#)

Isle Royale National Park

Backpacker fatality

On August 12, a 37-year-old was backpacking near Lake LeSage when they experienced "sudden onset medical complications." The individual lost consciousness and stopped breathing. CPR was administered, but attempts to resuscitate were unsuccessful. Other backpackers were able to get out "a delayed 911 text." Park staff arrived on scene and stayed with the party overnight. Early the next morning, park staff were able to transport the party out. An investigation of the incident is underway. Source: [Isle Royale National](#)

[Park](#)

Joshua Tree National Park

Paintballs

On August 4, a park ranger patrolling the Jumbo Rocks Campground noticed fresh paintball splatter on structures and signs. Law enforcement investigated further and found a slingshot in plain view inside a vehicle. While being interviewed, three visitors admitted to firing paintballs with a compressed paintball gun and slingshots at signs, bathrooms, and dumpsters throughout the park the night before. Paintball guns and slingshots are considered weapons and prohibited from NPS lands. Each individual was issued a federal violation notice for vandalizing, defacing, or destroying property. The park's maintenance staff are working to clean up the facilities that were damaged in the incident. Source:

[Joshua Tree National Park](#)

Lake Mead National Recreation Area

Drowning

On August 10 around 8:30 PM, a 58-year-old was paddleboarding with a group of five other individuals near Boulder Islands when heavy winds started up. Several group members fell into the water. The 58-year-old went missing in the incident. They were not wearing a life jacket at the time. Personnel from the NPS, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department Search and Rescue, and Southern Nevada Off Road Recovery supported a search. On August 14, the individual was found deceased, north of Boulder Harbor. Source: [News3LV](#), [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#)

Mount Rainier National Park

Aging bridge

A recent inspection on the Nisqually Suspension Bridge in Longmire, Washington, revealed that it is aging and can no longer accommodate heavy vehicles. Vehicles over 3 tons are no longer permitted to cross. Source: [KIRO7](#)

Rocky Mountain National Park

Hiker fall

On August 16, a 70-year-old took a "15 to 20-foot fall" near Estes Cone. The park's Search and Rescue Team provided care on scene and prepared the patient to be extricated by helicopter hoist. A Colorado Army National Guard helicopter from Buckley Space Force Base then hoisted the individual and transported them to Upper Beaver Meadows. They were transferred to a Med Evac air ambulance and "flown to further emergency care." Source: [Estes Park News](#)

Yellowstone National Park

Drunken spree

On August 10, an individual "born in 1967" attempted to purchase beer at the Old Faithful Upper General Store. After their credit cards were declined, the individual stole a "service station heavy-duty wrecker." They then drove north, turned around, drove the wrong way on a one-way road near the Old Faithful Lodge, went off the pavement, drove through a fence, and came to a stop in a field. They exited the tow truck and ran south into the trees. A tow truck driver began to run after the individual, but was ordered to stop by two NPS rangers. The rangers pursued the individual through the trees, and across Grand Loop Road through traffic, where two other rangers were able to stop the individual at gunpoint. When asked for their name, the individual gave a fabricated name and said they were an "undisclosed United States Marshal" and they needed the truck to get to "the United States Marshal's Headquarters." The individual had the smell of alcohol on their being. The individual was brought to Mammoth Jail. They refused to participate in a field sobriety test, preliminary breath test, or blood draw, which require a warrant to perform. The individual has been charged with nine misdemeanors, including destruction of federal property, reckless driving, and a DUI. On August 12, the individual pleaded guilty to all charges. The judge ordered the individual be detained, with a formal detention hearing on August 15. Source: [Oil City News](#)

Yosemite National Park

Hiker fatality

On August 8, a 20-year-old passed away in a "tragic accident" while hiking with colleagues in the park. No other details were released about the incident. Source: [The Sacramento Bee](#)

Wildfires

- *Crater Lake National Park* - On July 17, the Middle Fork Fire was discovered in the Middle Fork area in the northwest corner of the park. As of August 19, the fire was 5,222 acres and 0% contained, with 54 personnel assigned. On August 13, the park closed the North Entrance to allow firefighters to prepare control lines along North Entrance Road. The road is closed from North Junction to the park boundary at the junction with Highway 138. All other park roads remain open, with the exception of construction closures on East Rim Drive. Source: [Inciweb](#), [Crater Lake National Park](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - On July 23, the Muir Creek Fire was discovered in the southern part of the park on the western slope of Mount Saint Nicholas, about 4 miles east of U.S. Highway 2 and the Pinnacle community. It is believed to have been lightning-caused. As of August 2, the fire was 30 acres and 0% contained, with 32 personnel assigned. Source: [Inciweb](#)
- *Lassen Volcanic National Park* - On July 24, the Park Fire started off Upper Park

Road in Upper Bidwell Park, east of the city of Chico, California. The fire started after a 42-year-old set their car on fire, put it in neutral, then pushed it into a ravine. The individual was arrested. On July 27, the fire approached the park's western edge, causing the park to close. Visitors and park employees were evacuated from the area. On August 17, the park opened Highway 89 from the Northwest Entrance at Manzanita Lake to the parking lot at Devastated Area. Pedestrians and bicyclists may also go as far as Summit Lake. The highway is closed to all traffic from Summit Lake to the southwestern boundary, and outlying areas of the park also remain closed. Some trails also remain closed. As of August 19, the fire was 429,388 acres and 53% contained, with 4,260 personnel assigned. Source: Lassen Volcanic National Park ([7/27](#), [8/16](#)), [CAL FIRE](#), [The Washington Post](#)

- *North Cascades National Park*

- On July 23, the park closed Cascade River Road, Cascade Pass Trail, and the Johannesburg Cross-country Zone due to the nearby Pincer Two Fire, located on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Source: [North Cascades National Park](#)
- On July 25, the town of Stehekin in Lake Chelan National Recreation Area (part of the North Cascades Complex) evacuated all visitors due to a Level 2 order ("be ready to leave") for evacuation due to the Pioneer Fire. About 130 people left the area via ferry. The fire started on June 8 about 18 miles down lake from Stehekin at Pioneer Creek due to "undetermined" causes. On July 28, Stehekin Valley to High Bridge moved to Level 3 evacuation, requiring all residents to leave. As of August 9, the fire had moved past the Stehekin landing toward the Stehekin River Valley. As of August 19, it was 38,727 acres and 23% contained, with 622 personnel assigned. Source: [The Wenatchee World](#) ([7/25](#), [8/9](#)), [Inciweb](#), [North Cascades National Park](#)
- On August 3, the campground, raft launch, and picnic area at Goodell Creek were closed temporarily due to a wildfire started by an illegal campfire. It was known as the Goodell Fire. Source: [North Cascades National Park](#), [KIRO7](#)
- On August 4, the park closed a number of new trails due to a new fire start, the Flat Creek Fire, located west of Stehekin on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. As of August 18, the fire was 43 acres with 11 personnel assigned. Source: [North Cascades National Park](#), [Kitsap Sun](#)
- On August 9, the Ruby Fire was discovered burning on the south side of Ruby Mountain in Ross Lake National Recreation Area (part of the North Cascades Complex). It is believed to be lightning-caused. On August 9, the park closed Colonial Creek South Campground and boat launch, the Diablo Lake area from State Route 20 to Thunder Creek, and nearby trails and backcountry camps. As of August 16, the fire was 500 acres and 0% contained, with 87 personnel assigned. Source: North Cascades National Park ([8/9](#), [8/10](#), [fire closure page](#)), [Inciweb](#)
- On August 9, the Riprap Fire and Pierce Fire were caused by lightning. The

Riprap Fire is burning on Sourdough Mountain. As of August 10, it was 0.1 acres. The Pierce Fire is burning on Pierce Mountain. As of August 10, it was estimated at 1 acre. Both fires were "supported with aerial delivered water throughout the day." Source: [North Cascades National Park](#)

- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - On August 3, lightning caused the Coffeepot Fire in the southwest corner of the park, about 2.5 miles southeast of Case Mountain. It was quickly contained by fire crews at 0.1 acres. After "nearly a week of no activity, a burning tree fell and rolled over the containment line, and the fire began to grow." As of August 19, the fire was 869 acres and 0% contained with 353 personnel assigned. It has expanded along the southwestern perimeter of the park onto Bureau of Land Management lands. Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#), [Inciweb](#)
- *Wind Cave National Park* - On July 27, lightning caused the Limestone Fire, located about two miles northeast of the park's visitor center. Personnel from the NPS, South Dakota Wildland Fire, Sioux Falls Fire Rescue, Black Hawk Fire Department, Black Hills National Forest, and a SEAT single engine airtanker responded to the scene. The fire was contained at 13.4 acres on July 28. Source: [Wind Cave National Park](#)
- *Yosemite National Park*
 - The Echo Fire is located north of Little Yosemite Valley above Echo Valley, near Merced Lake. It was discovered on August 2 and was caused by lightning. As of August 19, it was 0.5 acres and 0% contained.
 - The Forsyth Fire is located near Little Yosemite Valley in the 2014 Meadow Fire footprint. It was discovered on August 2 and was caused by lightning. As of August 9, it was 0.1 acres and 0% contained.
 - The Middle Fire is located near the Middle Fork of the Tuolumne River, west of White Wolf. It was discovered on August 4 and was caused by lightning. As of August 19, it was 310 acres and 85% contained.
 - The Morrison Fire is located one mile north of Morrison Creek. It was discovered on August 4 and was lightning caused. As of August 19, it was 31 acres and 50% contained.
 - Source: Yosemite National Park ([8/9](#), [8/19](#))

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Acadia National Park* - The individuals that trespassed in the closure area of the Precipice Trail on Champlain Mountain (see [8/7/24 Coalition Report](#)), turned themselves in. The individuals, ages 22, 20, and 19, will be charged with violation of a superintendent's closure, a class B misdemeanor. Source: [Mount Desert Islander](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - On August 12, park staff were able to restore the pump at Havasupai Gardens and all water restrictions on the South Rim have been

removed (see [8/7/24 Coalition Report](#)). Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

- *Grand Canyon National Park* - On August 14, a team of 27 Search and Rescue members were able to complete a challenging recovery of a parachute stuck on the cliffs below Yavapai Point, left behind after a fatal BASE jumping accident on August 1 (see [8/7/24 Coalition Report](#)). The rescue involved a "rarely used technique called a 'two-rope offset system.'" Source: [St. George News](#)
- *Shenandoah National Park* - On August 12, the park lifted its parkwide ban on fishing, which it had instituted on June 27 due to dry conditions and low stream flows. Recent rainfall has improved conditions. Source: [Shenandoah National Park](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - On August 14, the park lifted some of its temporary fishing closures (see [7/24/24 Coalition Report](#)). The Madison River, Firehold River, and Gibbon River continue to have full fishing closures in place. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

Corrections

We incorrectly identified the national recreation area for the town of Stehekin in our report about the Pioneer Fire. Stehekin is located in Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. Thanks to Dan Moses for bringing this to our attention.

Acknowledgments

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- Editor: Katie Wallace
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- Regular Correspondent: Don Hellmann, Chris Soller
- Issue Contributors: Dan Moses, Randy Turner

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

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

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