



The Coalition Report

Thursday, December 26, 2024

A big **thank you** to our members and supporters for your **incredible generosity** this year. Your commitment to the Coalition's mission is what makes our work possible.

If you have not had a chance to make a year-end [gift](#), **it's not too late**. [Your contribution](#) will help ensure our parks and public lands remain protected for all to enjoy - today, and for years to come.

Wishing you a joyful holiday season and a very happy New Year.

Coalition Actions

The Coalition issued [a statement of support](#) for the designation of the Caja del Rio National Monument in New Mexico.

We joined several organizations and one individual in submitting [comments](#) to the Bureau of Land Management's Pahrump Field Office (NV) about their Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment for the Copper Rays Solar Project. The comments focus on the plan's lack of consideration of the potential impacts on the Old Spanish National Historic Trail.

The Coalition joined several other conservation organizations in submitting [comments](#) on the Bureau of Land Management's Colorado Office 2025 Third Quarter Oil and Gas Lease Sale, applauding their efforts in applying the Fluid Mineral Leases and Leasing Process Rule.

We issued [a statement](#) on December 19 condemning the potential government shutdown (since averted) due to its effects on the National Park System, as well as its visitors and employees.

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 December 16, President Joe Biden established Frances Perkins National Monument in Newcastle, Maine. Frances Perkins was the first woman to service in a Presidential Cabinet, serving as Secretary of Labor from 1933 to 1945. The Frances Perkins Center manages the 57-acre Perkins Homestead and donated 2.3 acres of the site to the NPS for the monument. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *19 new National Historic Landmarks* - On December 16, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland announced the designation of 19 new National Historic Landmarks across the country. Furthermore, 14 current landmarks had their documentation updated and three NHLs had their designation withdrawn due to demolition or destruction. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Accessibility in parks* - The National Parks Conservation Association published [an article](#) about efforts at various parks to increase accessibility for different mobility types, particularly the use of adaptive devices for different terrain. Source: National Parks Conservation Association
- *Climbing bolts in wilderness* - On December 18, the NPS announced that it is rescinding draft guidance that would have classified climbing bolts as “permanent installations” that are prohibited in national wilderness areas. Park leaders will be given leeway to manage climbing in wilderness “on a park-by-park basis consistent with applicable law and policy.” Source: [Durango Herald](#)
- *Profile on regional paleontologist* - SFGate published [an article](#) about Aubrey Bonde and her role as the first regional paleontologist serving Death Valley National Park, Great Basin National Park, Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, and Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument. Source: SFGate
- *New book about Japanese American incarceration* - A new book, *The Afterlife is Letting Go*, by Brandon Shimoda, was published recently by City Lights Books. It features 15 essays blending “interviews and personal insights” about the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans. Source: [Los Angeles Times](#)
- *Deferred maintenance op-ed* - The *Las Vegas Review-Journal* published [an op-ed](#) by Tate Watkins, a research fellow at the Property and Environment Research Center, about the history and ongoing challenges of the maintenance backlog in the NPS. The op-ed argues that Congress should not put such stringent mandates on funding that is earmarked only for deferred maintenance, that parks need to do a better job of tracking their maintenance needs systematically, and that more funding is needed, such as a surcharge for international visitors. Source: *Las Vegas Review-Journal*

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Acadia National Park* - The National Parks Conservation Association published [an article](#) about the park's efforts to restore soils and plant communities through its Save Our Summits project, including the work of hundreds of volunteers hauling soil. Source: National Parks Conservation Association
- *Acadia National Park* - On December 12, the park responded to the State of Maine's Department of Transportation regarding its December 9 proposal for a three-party agreement with the Town of Southwest Harbor and the NPS for maintenance and repair of Seawall Road. The road was damaged by storms in early 2024. In the communication, the park stated that the State's five-day review and response mandate was "unreasonable and unrealistic," that the terms did not reflect the most recent discussions on the matter, and that there is significant vetting needed through the Department of the Interior's Solicitors Office to meet the requirements of the Anti-Deficiency Act. Source: [Bar Harbor Story](#)
- *American Battlefield Protection Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On December 12, the NPS announced the award of \$1.5 million in Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants for two projects protecting 100.63 acres at two former Civil War battlefields in Tennessee and Virginia. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Badlands National Park* - The park issued a prospectus for a 10-year concession contract providing lodging, food and beverage, retail, and camping services at the park. Proposals are due by March 19, 2025. Source: [Badlands National Park](#)
- *Bandelier National Monument* - The park released a 2024 annual report, highlighting its shared services agreement with Valles Caldera National Preserve, the reintroduction of native fish in Frijoles Creek, the Tsankawi Unit trail reroute, expansion of the Juniper Campground parking, and recycling over 9,000 pounds of scrap metal. Source: [Bandelier National Monument](#)
- *Big Cypress National Preserve, Everglades National Park* - *NBC Miami* published [an article](#) about the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, their relationship to the Everglades region, and efforts to protect it through advocacy. Source: *NBC Miami*
- *Canyon de Chelly National Monument* - On December 19, the NPS and Federal Aviation Administration completed an Air Tour Management Plan for the park. It prohibits commercial air tours over the park and within one half-mile outside its boundary. Source: [Canyon de Chelly National Monument](#)
- *Coltsville National Historical Park* - The *Hartford Courant* published [an article](#) chronicling structural issues on the two buildings that make up the former Colt firearms complex. The park's superintendent, Kelly Fellner, has stated that they hope to have the funding lined up soon. The renovation is expected to cost "at least \$10 million." Two other buildings, the carriage house and gardener's cottage, have received funding for renovation, and the park

is expected to open in 2025. Source: *Hartford Courant*

- *Cumberland Island National Seashore, Fort Matanzas National Monument, Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve* - The NPS awarded “nearly \$800,000” to the University of North Florida to continue its efforts to install “pervious oyster shell habitat that creates living shorelines” to restore coastal ecosystems and abate erosion in the three parks. Preliminary research suggests they reduce the effects of wave energy, trap sediment, and recruit oysters at a faster rate than other efforts. Source: [University of North Florida](#)
- *Flight 93 National Memorial* - In November, the park completed the first phase of its revitalization of the 40 Memorial Groves and Allée (walkway). Many of the trees in the area were showing signs of decline and premature mortality. The NPS is collaborating with Pennsylvania State University and other partners to remediate soils, improve drainage, and use higher-quality nursery stock. The Friends of Flight 93 National Memorial are funding the project. Source: [Flight 93 National Memorial](#)
- *Fort Point National Historic Site, Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - On December 21, the park opened a new temporary exhibit, “How We Love Our Parks: Volunteer Photographers of Golden Gate National Recreation Area.” It showcases the park’s Volunteers-in-Parks photographers. The exhibit will run through May 2025. Source: [Golden Gate National Recreation Area](#)
- *Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park* - Starting on January 6, the park will establish a parkwide speed limit of 25 miles per hour for all traffic. The park has recorded an increase in speeding violations, collisions with wildlife, motor vehicle accidents, and “near-miss incidents” due to commuter cut-through traffic and increased recreational use. The new speed limit will increase public and wildlife safety. Source: [Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park](#)
- *Gateway National Recreation Area* - On December 10, New York City Mayor Eric Adams announced that the city will close 25 shelters for asylum seekers, including the one at Floyd Bennett Field. The city reports that management strategies have lessened the number of asylum seekers in shelters to its lowest point in 17 months. Source: [ABC News](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - On January 6, 2025, the park will begin a major rehabilitation of the Laurel Falls Trail, including improvements to the trail and parking. The project will take 18 months, and the trail will be closed throughout that time period. The Sugarland Mountain Trail and its parking lot will also be closed. Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - Fox Weather published [an article](#) about Eric Johnson, who brings a poinsettia each year to the park in honor of the heroics that saved his life while backpacking in the park during a snowstorm as a 15-year-old in 1974. Source: *Fox Weather*

- *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - On February 17, 2025, the park will close the Kīlauea Visitor Center for a major renovation project, including improvements to accessibility and restrooms, the addition of a pavilion, the conversion of offices to visitor space, a larger store, and new exhibits in both English and 'ōlelo Hawai'i. The project could take “up to two years” to complete. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)
- *Homestead National Historical Park* - On December 19, the park reopened the historic Palmer-Epard Cabin to the public after a restoration project, including the replacement of damaged logs. The restoration was executed by a Maintenance Action Team and funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [Homestead National Historical Park](#)
- *Ice Age National Scenic Trail* - The trail's office and garage were recently rehabilitated with support from a Maintenance Action Team from the Historic Preservation Training Center. Funding for the project came from the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [Ice Age National Scenic Trail](#)
- *Jewel Cave National Monument* - The park recently restored the roof and gutter system on the Historic Cabin at the Historic Area. The project was completed by a Maintenance Action Team by the NPS Historic Preservation Training Center with funding from the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [Jewel Cave National Monument](#)
- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - On December 19, the NPS and Federal Highways Administration terminated a plan to reroute the Willow Beach Road. After considerable analysis, it was found that the reroute would “result in significant resource impact.” The park is considering other options to address erosion and deterioration of the road within its existing alignment. Source: [Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)
- *Lincoln Memorial* - WUSA9 published [an article](#) about the ongoing effort to build a 15,000-square-foot museum in the undercroft of the memorial. The \$69 million project is being funded by the NPS and National Park Foundation. It is expected to be complete in 2026. Source: WUSA9
- *Petroglyph National Monument* - On December 17, the park opened a Request for Expressions of Interest to lease the Las Imágenes Visitor Information Center/Sophie Aberle House. Responses are due by February 11. Source: [Petroglyph National Monument](#), [SAM.gov](#)
- *Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program* (an NPS-administered program) - In November, the RTCA selected 10 communities and partners across the southeast to receive assistance. Source: [The Rogersville Review](#)
- *Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* - The *Los Angeles Times* published [an article](#) about the challenges and efforts in managing extreme fire risk in the Santa Monica Mountains. Source: *Los Angeles Times*

- *Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway* - The park recently completed a project to restore the historic Gibson Cabin, including replacing the roof, stabilizing structural elements, preserving the exterior, and re-decking the access bridge. The project was executed by a Maintenance Action Team from the Historic Preservation Training Center, and funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - *National Parks Traveler* published [an article](#) about the park's efforts to safely remove trash from geothermal features, including an interview with park geologist Jeff Hungerford. Source: *National Parks Traveler*
- *Yellowstone National Park* - *The Spokesman-Review* published [an article](#) about the challenges to introducing bison to lands outside the park. Retired NPS wildlife biologist Rick Wallen is quoted in the article, suggesting that bison will thrive more capably if Montanans can embrace a free-roaming management strategy. Source: *The Spokesman-Review*
- *Yosemite National Park* - The park announced that it has completed a second phase of a major wetland restoration project in Ackerson Meadow. The five-year project is considered the largest in the park's history, consisting of restoring 103 acres and removing a 3-mile long, 14-foot-deep "gully network." The NPS has partnered with the Stanislaus National Forest, American Rivers, and Yosemite Conservancy on the project, with much of the execution by Hanford Applied Restoration and Conservation, Inc. The \$17.7 million project is being funded by American Rivers, the Bonneville Environmental Foundation, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Wildlife Conservation Board, Google, the National Park Foundation, the NPS, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Yosemite Conservancy. The third and final phase is expected to be completed in Summer 2025. Source: [The Union Democrat](#)

Personnel Changes

- *Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine, Hampton National Historic Site, Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail* - Marie Frías Sauter was selected as the new superintendent. Marie has over 30 years of NPS experience, most recently as superintendent at White Sands National Park. She begins her new role in early 2025. Source: [Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail](#)
- *George Washington Memorial Parkway* - Jennifer "Jen" Madello was selected as the new superintendent. Jen has 21 years of NPS experience, most recently as the program administrator for the NPS park facility management division in Washington, DC. She will begin her new role December 29. Source: [George Washington Memorial Parkway](#)
- *Gettysburg Foundation* - Jackie Spainhour was selected as the new president and chief executive officer. Jackie has over a decade of nonprofit leadership experience, most recently as the president of the Historic Congressional Cemetery. Source: [Gettysburg](#)

[Connection](#)

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

- Haywood “Woody” Stephen Harrell, 77, passed away on December 10. Woody worked for the NPS for 40 years, including at Wright Brothers National Memorial and as superintendent at Shiloh National Military Park. He retired from the NPS in 2012. Source: [The Courier](#)
- Amy Melynn Hartell passed away on November 16. Amy worked at Crater Lake National Park on a trail crew and as an interpretive ranger for a time, and also contributed interpretive artwork and design for the Historic American Engineering Record, including drawings of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park. Source: [Herald and News](#)
- Frances “Ann” Hitchcock, 78, passed away on December 10. Ann worked for the NPS for 44 years. She was the first chief curator of the NPS and later became a senior advisor for scientific collections and environmental safeguards. Source: [Legacy/The Washington Post](#)
- Vincent “Vince” Omar Leggett, 71, passed away on November 23. Vince founded Blacks of Chesapeake Foundation, Inc., and devoted much of his life to preserving and sharing Black history and culture in Chesapeake Bay. The NPS published [a series of articles](#) honoring his life and legacy. Source: [WM. Reese and Sons Mortuary](#), National Park Service Office of Communications
- Guy W. Runnion, III, 83, passed away on December 10. Guy worked for the NPS for over 20 years, starting in 1995. Source: [VC Star](#)
- Cornelia Elizabeth Printz, 86, passed away on December 21. Cornelia worked for 28 years as a contract specialist at Shenandoah National Park. Source: [Tribute Archive](#)
- Boyd L. Sponaugle, Jr., 86, passed away on December 18. Boyd worked for the NPS for over 20 years, including time in Alaska, Maine, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia. Source: [Charles F. Snyder Funeral Homes and Crematory](#)
- Charlie Michael “Mike” Strayhan, 73, passed away on December 14. Mike worked at Yellowstone National Park and Grand Teton National Park “during his college years.” Source: [Legacy/Aulds Funeral Home](#)

In the News

- *The New York Times* published [a guest essay](#) by Jon Waterman about a 500-mile packrafting trip he undertook in 2021 through northern Alaska, including Gates of the Arctic National Park. The trip was an effort to observe and document the effects of climate change on the region. Jon worked for the NPS for a time, including in Denali National Park and Preserve. Source: *The New York Times*

Open for Comment

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

- *Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through January 14](#) on a proposal to increase fees. Source: [Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area](#)
- *Dinosaur National Monument* - Public comment is [open through January 14](#) on a draft fire management plan for the park. Source: [Dinosaur National Monument](#)
- *Gauley River National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through January 3](#) on a proposal to rehabilitate and expand the Gauley Tailwaters Campground. Source: [Gauley Tailwaters Campground](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - Public comment is [open through January 6](#) on a visitor use management plan, particularly focused on access and vehicle and pedestrian congestion. Source: [Glacier National Park](#)
- *Glen Echo Park* - Public comment is [open through January 24](#) on a management plan amendment focused on expanding programming, improving accessibility, exploring environmental sustainability, and addressing wayfinding and circulation issues. Source: [Glen Echo Park](#)
- *Natchez Trace Parkway* - Public comment is [open through January 6](#) on a plan to replace the John Coffee Memorial Bridge over the Tennessee River. Source: [Natchez Trace Parkway](#)
- *Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway* - Public comment is [open through December 31](#) on a comprehensive river management plan. Source: [Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway](#)

Other Department of the Interior News

- *Protections for monarchs* - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has [opened public comment through March 12, 2025](#), on a proposal to list the monarch butterfly as a threatened species. Monarchs in the American West have declined by 99% since the 1980s, while Eastern monarchs have declined by over 80%. Source: [The Daily Mining Gazette](#)
- *New National Wildlife Refuge* - On December 13, Southern Maryland Woodlands National

Wildlife Refuge was established. It was created through the donation of a 31-acre parcel, which is expected to be the “first of several donations that will become part of the new refuge.” It is the 573rd unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

- *Okefenokee nominated for UNESCO* - The United States will nominate the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge this year to become a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site. Source: [WABE](#)
- *Protection of Pecos watershed* - On December 12, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland initiated a two-year period of withdrawal of 165,000 acres of Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service lands from new mining claims and federal mineral leases in the upper Pecos watershed in New Mexico. The two-year withdrawal will be temporary while the two agencies consider a 20-year withdrawal to protect the area for cultural and natural resource protection, as well as recreation. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Updates to Western Solar Plan* - On December 20, the Department of the Interior announced updates to the Western Solar Plan, the roadmap for the expanded development of solar energy across Bureau of Land Management lands across the western United States. The updated plan includes four new states and includes important protection measures for wildlife habitat and corridors, as well as cultural resources. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *SouthCoast Wind Project* - On December 20, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management approved the SouthCoast Wind Project offshore of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. It is expected to generate up to 2.4 GW of offshore wind energy. It is the 11th commercial-scale offshore wind energy project approved under the Biden Administration. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$450 million for community parks* - On December 13, the Department of the Interior announced \$450 million over the next five years to create new parks or renovate existing parks in local communities around the U.S. through the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership program. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$109 million for orphaned wells* - On December 16, the Department of the Interior awarded \$109.6 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for plugging, remediating and reclaiming orphaned oil and gas wells on public lands across the U.S. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$37 million for drought resilience in OR* - On December 20, the Department of the Interior announced \$37.4 million in Inflation Reduction Act funding for three projects in Oregon that will improve drought resiliency, including efforts to convert open canals to pipes. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$15 million for conservation at military bases* - On December 20, the Departments of the

Interior and Defense awarded \$15 million in funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the DOD's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program for conservation and recreation access around military bases in five states. Source:

[Department of the Interior](#)

- *\$3.7 million for abandoned mines* - On December 12, the Department of the Interior announced the availability of \$3.7 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for abandoned hardrock mine remediation. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Secretary Haaland on The Daily Show* - On December 10, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland was interviewed on "The Daily Show" on *Comedy Central*. The interview discussed various topics, including her background and leadership style, and the efforts of the DOI to bring attention and healing for Indigenous communities around the legacy of Indian boarding schools. Source: [Native News Online](#)

Congressional Actions

Reports on legislation, upcoming hearings, and new public laws of relevance to the national parks, prepared by Chris Soller, former superintendent of Fire Island National Seashore and legislative specialist for the National Park Service.

New Public Laws

Public Law 118-158, the American Relief Act, 2025, was signed into law by the President on Saturday, December 21, 2024. It makes further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2025.

Senate Actions

December 16

Senate reported S. 5099, to prescribe requirements relating to the management of the federal property commonly known as Plum Island, New York, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute. (S. Rept. No. 118-295)

Senate passed H.R. 8219, Lahaina National Heritage Area Study Act: to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating certain land as the Lahaina National Heritage Area.

December 17 - The Senate passed:

- S. 1277, Mammoth Cave National Park Boundary Adjustment Act: to modify the boundary of the Mammoth Cave National Park in the State of Kentucky;
- H.R. 1727, Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park Commission Extension Act: to amend the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Development Act to extend the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park Commission;
- S. 3543, Historic Greenwood District - Black Wall Street National Monument Establishment

Act: to establish the Historic Greenwood District - Black Wall Street National Monument in the state of Oklahoma, after agreeing to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute;

- H.R. 6826, Paul S. Sarbanes Visitor and Education Center: to designate the visitor and education center at Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine as the Paul S. Sarbanes Visitor and Education Center;
- H.R. 6843, Atchafalaya National Heritage Area: to expand the boundaries of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area to include Lafourche Parish, Louisiana.
- S. 1097, César E. Chávez and the Farmworker Movement National Historical Park Act: to establish the César E. Chávez and the Farmworker Movement National Historical Park in the states of California and Arizona, after agreeing to the committee amendment.

December 18 - The Senate passed:

- S. 2018, Connect Our Parks Act: to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct an assessment to identify locations in National Parks in which there is the greatest need for broadband internet access service and areas in National Parks in which there is the greatest need for cellular service, after agreeing to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute.
- S. 961, Salem Maritime National Historical Park Redesignation and Boundary Study Act: to redesignate the Salem Maritime National Historic Site in Salem, Massachusetts, as the "Salem Maritime National Historic Park;"
- S. 4209, Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument Access Act: to provide greater regional access to the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument in the state of Maine;
- S. 1059, Big Bend National Park Boundary Adjustment Act: to adjust the boundary of Big Bend National Park in the State of Texas;
- S. 432, Nulhegan River and Paul Stream Wild and Scenic River Study Act: to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate the Nulhegan River and Paul Stream in the state of Vermont for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System;
- S. 608, Deerfield River Wild and Scenic River Study Act: to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of the Deerfield River for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System;
- S. 4129, Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Museum Artifacts Act: to contribute funds and artifacts to the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora, North Dakota, after agreeing to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 5136, Plum Island Preservation Study Act: to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of Plum Island, after agreeing to the following amendment proposed thereto: Schumer (for Blumenthal) Amendment No. 3344, in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 2620, Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act: to establish the Chesapeake National Recreation Area as a unit of the National Park System, after agreeing to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 4994, Vicksburg National Military Park Boundary Modification Act: to modify the boundary of the Vicksburg National Military Park in the state of Mississippi.

December 19: The Senate passed:

- S. 4607, America's National Churchill Museum National Historic Landmark Act: to designate the America's National Churchill Museum National Historic Landmark;
- H.R. 6492, Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences (EXPLORE) Act: to improve recreation opportunities on, and facilitate greater access to, federal public land;
- S. 2160, Urban Canal Modernization Act: to amend the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 to authorize certain extraordinary operation and maintenance work for urban canals of concern, after agreeing to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 4851, Scarper Ridge Golden Gate National Recreation Area Boundary Adjustment Act: to adjust the boundaries of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area to include the Scarper Ridge property;
- S. 2784, Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park: to amend the Dayton Aviation Heritage Preservation Act of 1992 to adjust the boundary of the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park, after agreeing to the committee amendment; and
- S. 2742, Fort Ontario Holocaust Refugee Shelter National Historical Park Establishment Act: to establish the Fort Ontario National Monument in the state of New York as a unit of the National Park System, after agreeing to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute.

December 20 - The Senate passed:

- H.R. 10545, American Relief Act: By 85 yeas to 11 nays (Vote No. 339), making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2025;
- H.R. 1318, Women's Suffrage National Monument Location Act: to authorize the location of a monument on the National Mall to commemorate and honor the women's suffrage movement and the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution;
- S. 3195, General George C. Marshall House: to designate the General George C. Marshall House, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, as an affiliated area of the National Park System, after agreeing to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- H.R. 8012, Jackie Robinson Ballpark National Commemorative Site Act: to establish the Jackie Robinson Ballpark National Commemorative Site in the state of Florida;
- H.R. 6852, Holcombe Rucker Park National Commemorative Site Act: to designate Holcombe Rucker Park, in Harlem, New York, as a National Commemorative Site.

House Actions

December 10

The House reported:

- H.R. 1647, to redesignate the Salem Maritime National Historic Site as the “Salem Maritime National Historical Park” and for the purposes (H. Rept. 118–835);
- H.R. 8931, to redesignate Saratoga National Historical Park as Saratoga National Battlefield Park (H.Rept. 118–843);
- H.R. 9516, to amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to provide for lifetime National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Passes for family members of

members of the Armed Forces who lost their lives while serving their country, with an amendment (H.Rept. 118–845, Part 1); and

- H.R. 8012, to establish the Jackie Robinson Ballpark National Commemorative Site in the state of Florida, and for other purposes, with an amendment (H. Rept. 118–848).

The House Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing entitled “Desecrating Old Glory: Investigating How the Pro-Hamas Protests Turned National Park Service Land into a Violent Disgrace.” Testimony was heard from Mark Lee Greenblatt, Inspector General, Department of the Interior; Charles Cuvelier, Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection, National Park Service, Department of the Interior; and public witnesses.

December 12 - The House reported:

- H.R. 4338, to amend the National Trails System Act to designate the Route 66 National Historic Trail, and for other purposes, with an amendment (H. Rept. 118–865); and
- H.R. 1584, to establish Plum Island, New York, as a national monument, with an amendment (H.Rept. 118–866).

December 16 - The House reported:

- H.R. 9533, to amend the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to optimize conservation through resource prioritization, incentivize wildlife conservation on private lands, provide for greater incentives to recover listed species, create greater transparency and accountability in recovering listed species, and limit reasonable and prudent measures, with an amendment (H. Rept. 118–879); and
- H.R. 6210, to designate the General George C. Marshall House, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, as an affiliated area of the National Park System, and for other purposes, with an amendment (H. Rept. 118–882).

December 17 - The House passed:

- H.R. 8012, Jackie Robinson Commemorative Site Act: amended, to establish the Jackie Robinson Ballpark National Commemorative Site in the state of Florida;
- H.R. 8931, Redesignating Saratoga National Historical Park as Saratoga National Battlefield Park to redesignate Saratoga National Historical Park as Saratoga National Battlefield Park; and
- H.R. 9516, Military Families National Parks Access Enhancement Act: amended, to amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to provide for lifetime National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Passes for family members of members of the Armed Forces who lost their lives while serving their country.

December 18 - The House reported:

- H.R. 1319, to require the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to develop long-distance bike trails on Federal land (H. Rept. 118–907, Part 1); and

- H.R. 6342, to promote and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities for members of the Armed Forces and veterans on Federal recreational lands and waters, with an amendment (H. Rept. 118–911, Part 1).

December 19 - The House reported H.R. 1380, to require the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to issue guidance on climbing management in designated wilderness areas, and for other purposes, with an amendment (H. Rept. 118–749, Part 1).

December 20 - The House passed American Relief Act, 2025, H.R. 10545, making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2025, by a 2/3 yeas-and-nays vote of 366 yeas to 34 nays with one answering “present.”

Incidents

Listed alphabetically by park.

Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site **Structural deficiencies**

On December 13, the park closed the reconstructed fort due to structural deficiencies that were exacerbated by a heavy snow event. The storm created a “major loss of plaster and render cover on brick walls, leaving walls and supports severely unstable and liable of collapse.” The NPS is working to assess the damage and stabilize the structure. There is no current reopening date.

Source: [Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site](#)

Cuyahoga Valley National Park **Train cars derail**

On December 21, three train cars came off the tracks near the village of Peninsula during the popular “North Pole Adventure” event, run by the nonprofit Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad. The cars remained upright, and no injuries were reported. 588 passengers were transported by buses back to Rockside Station. The incident is under investigation by the National Park Service.

Source: [Cleveland.com](#)

Grand Canyon National Park **Missing person**

On December 10, a 66-year-old on a commercial bus tour failed to return to the bus. They were last seen at Mather Point on the South Rim, and are believed to have walked west towards the Bright Angel Lodge or Hermits Rest. The NPS is looking for any details the public can provide.

Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

Grand Teton National Park **Film permit lawsuit**

On December 18, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression and National Press Photographers Association filed a lawsuit on behalf of two filmmakers that wanted to film an attempt to set the record for the fastest climb up the Grand Teton in September. The filmmakers were denied a permit because they were told it could turn the attempt into a “competitive event.” The individuals still filmed the attempt without a permit. The NPS announced later that the filmmakers’ actions “didn’t meet all the criteria for charges,” though it left the possibility open for future charges, should the footage be sold or used publicly. Source: [Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression](#)

Hawai’i Volcanoes National Park Eruption

On December 23 at around 2:20 AM, the summit of Kīlauea volcano began erupting, creating a lake of lava over 500 acres of the caldera floor and lava fountains of 250 feet in the southwest corner. Visitors are advised to exercise caution due to crowds, and conditions may change at any time, necessitating closures. There is a temporary flight restriction in place over Kīlauea. Source: [Hawai’i Volcanoes National Park](#)

Olympic National Park Road failure

On December 20, the park closed the Hoh Rain Forest area due to the danger of “imminent failure” of the Upper Hoh Road at milepost 9.7. The road is maintained by Jefferson County (WA), and will reopen when the risk of road failure is mitigated. Source: [Olympic National Park](#)

The White House and President’s Park Fence climber arrest

On December 14, an individual attempted to climb “temporary anti-scale fencing near the White House.” The individual was spotted by the Secret Service Uniformed Division and was quickly taken into custody before they were able to breach the fence. The individual was charged with unlawful entry. Source: [Daily News](#)

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Hunters accidentally poach in Canada

In August 2022, three individuals flew to High Culvert Camp in the park, near the U.S.-Canada border, for a 10-day hunting expedition. On the fifth day, they killed two Dall sheep at a location “8.3 meters past the international border on the Yukon [Canada] side.” They did not have permits to hunt in Canada. This month, the three individuals pleaded guilty to one count each for hunting without a permit, and one charge each for meat wastage (they had retrieved horns, skins, and portions of meat, but left approximately 13 kilograms of meat between the two sheep). In total, their fines amounted to \$37,000 and they were banned from hunting in the Yukon for five years. The group also faces pending charges in the U.S. related to the same incident for bringing sheep parts across international borders and allegedly making false statements to NPS officials about

whether or not they had shot a sheep. The individuals have said that they are “remorseful and embarrassed by the situation.” Source: [CBC](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Appalachian National Scenic Trail* - On December 13, the section of trail from Elk Garden Trailhead to the Virginia-Tennessee line will reopen for the first time since Hurricane Helene damaged much of the trail in early October. Source: [WFXR](#)
- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - On December 19, the park reopened a 0.2-mile section of beach from the southernmost jetty in Buxton, continuing to the south. This follows a major effort by the Army Corps of Engineers to remove 4,599 cubic yards of petroleum-impacted soil, 99,526 gallons of petroleum-impacted water, 278,00 pounds of concrete, 1,153 feet of pipe, and 1,088 feet of cable. Contaminated soil and water may still be present; NPS staff are closely monitoring the situation and have kept a 0.3-mile section of beach closed until a more comprehensive survey and remediation can be completed. Source: [Cape Hatteras National Seashore](#) (Editor note: Background information on this incident can be found in [9/6/23](#), [3/6/24](#), [4/3/24](#), [5/15/24](#), and [9/18/24](#) Coalition Reports)
- *Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park* - On December 11, the park announced that their investigation of the 12/7/24 wildland fire on Lookout Mountain (see [12/11/24 Coalition Report](#)) found that the fire was started by natural causes. A large rockslide began, likely due to “freeze/thaw action.” The boulder struck other rocks and trees, creating heat and sparks, and one tree struck a power line on the Hardy Trail. It is believed that the rockslide was more likely to have created the sparks than the power line. There was no evidence of human activity near the origin of the wildfire. The Mountain Beautiful Trail remains closed until further notice. Source: [Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park](#)

Corrections

In the 12/11/24 *Coalition Report*, we mistakenly reported Smokies Life’s relationship to Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Smokies Life is a cooperating association, not a philanthropic partner. Thank you to Laurel Rematore for the correction.

Acknowledgments

This newsletter is supported through Coalition staff and invaluable volunteers:

- Editor: Katie Wallace
- Tech and Production Support: Steve Pittleman, Debbie Reed, Emily Thompson
- Regular Correspondent: Chris Soller
- Issue Contributors: Joy Beasley, Lloyd N. Chapman, Laurel Rematore, Bill Walters

If you see something that might be of interest to Coalition members, send it to:

report@protectnps.org.

* * * * *

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

To receive a copy of this free publication, [join or support the Coalition](#). Any current, retired, or former-salaried (GS, Wage System, Seasonal, Temporary, or SES) National Park Service employee or volunteer who served under a signed volunteer agreement can join the Coalition. Coalition supporters who do not qualify under those criteria [may also join](#) and receive the newsletter.

--- ### ---