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The Coalition Report

Wednesday, July 10, 2024

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Coalition Actions

The Coalition joined with numerous organizations in [a letter](#) to the House Committee on Natural Resources expressing opposition to the Fix Our Forest Act, which was scheduled for Committee markup. Among other things, the letter details ways the proposed bill would roll back the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

We joined with 14 organizations in [a letter](#) to Lake Clark National Park and Preserve expressing concerns with the two proposed easements to provide access to the Johnson Tract. Among other things, the letter expresses that the easements will result in an undeveloped area becoming industrialized and noted there has been no meaningful process for public input.

The Coalition joined with partner organizations in [letters](#) to the House of Representatives expressing opposition to potential amendments to the appropriations bills for the Departments of Defense, State, and Homeland Security that would scale back existing environmental protections.

We issued [a joint statement](#) with the National Parks Conservation Association in response to new regulations regarding Alaska hunting and trapping announced by the NPS. While the Coalition's statement expresses support for the provisions that limit bear baiting, it expresses disappointment that provisions in the January 2023 proposed rule limiting additional sport hunting practices were not included (more on the rule below in National/Regional NPS Updates).

The Coalition sent [an Action Alert](#) to members in Arizona regarding a petition to the Environmental Protection Agency encouraging the agency to stand by its proposal to reject key parts of the Arizona proposed regional haze plan and take action to cut haze-causing pollutants.

We also sent [an Action Alert](#) to members in Kentucky regarding a petition to the Kentucky Division for Air Quality opposing their proposed regional haze plan because it fails to give a thorough analysis of Kentucky's top polluters and ignores NPS input and other stakeholder concerns.

The Coalition joined many other conservation organizations in [a letter](#) to Illinois Governor JB Pritzker expressing concern that delays to finalizing the Brandon Road Interbasin Project's Project Partnership Agreement (PPA) may allow invasive carp to invade Lake Michigan. The letter urged the governor to sign the PPA.

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.

- *Alaska Region bear baiting rule* - On June 28, the NPS announced a final rule that prohibits bear baiting while sport hunting in Alaska national preserves. The rule comes after several years of engagement with stakeholders, as well as a lawsuit that forced the NPS to reconsider its 2020 rule to allow bear baiting. It is now banned due to public safety dangers. Qualified federal subsistence users are not affected by the ban. The rule will be effective 30 days after publication in the Federal Register. Source: [National Park Service Alaska Region](#)
- *Op-ed on BASE jumping* - *The Park Record* published an op-ed by Brendan Weinstein, the BASE Access Board President, arguing that the National Park Service has improperly banned BASE jumping in parks, ignoring the Administrative Procedure Act and all requests for meetings and consideration of regulated use. Source: [The Park Record](#)

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Acadia National Park* - On June 28, Downeast Transportation, Inc., was awarded

\$23.5 million to acquire 23 electric buses and charging infrastructure. The buses serve Acadia National Park and Hancock County, Maine. The funding came from a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant from the Department of Transportation. Source: [Senator Angus King press release](#)

- *Appalachian National Scenic Trail* - On July 2, the National Park Trust and NPS announced the acquisition of a 128-acre parcel of land along the Appalachian NST. The property came up for sale and "faced immediate threats from potential development," so the National Park Trust purchased it and has held onto it for 19 months. The NPS recently took ownership. Source: [National Park Trust](#)
- *Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area* - On June 22, National Trails Day, a group of volunteers helped build a 40-foot trail bridge between Yahoo Falls and Alum Ford on the Sheltopee Trace. They also helped improve the vegetation, drainage, and tread on the Proctor Ridge Trail. Source: [Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area](#)
- *Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Curecanti National Recreation Area* - The *Montrose Press* published [an article](#) about the complicated history of water rights and flow conditions in the Gunnison River Basin. Both parks are mentioned in the article. Source: *Montrose Press*
- *Canyonlands National Park* - On July 3, the NPS released a public comment summary for its recent civic engagement on a comprehensive river management planning effort. Comments currently are under review and staff will draft alternatives at a later date. Source: [Canyonlands National Park](#)
- *Cape Cod National Seashore* - On July 1, the Cape Cod National Seashore Advisory Commission held a meeting that primarily focused on the status of dune shack leases in Provincetown and Truro. Source: [Cape Cod Times](#)
- *Edgar Allen Poe National Historic Site* - On July 8, the park began a project to upgrade the fire protection and suppression system. Work is expected to continue through this fall, and the site will be closed throughout the project. The \$931,230 project is being executed by LMG Property Group, Inc. It is being funded by the repair and rehabilitation discretionary funding for deferred maintenance. Source: [Independence National Historical Park](#)
- *Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve* - On June 27, the Department of the Interior released the Record of Decision for the Ambler Road project, a proposed 211-mile road that would have cut through Gates of the Arctic. The Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement selected the No Action Alternative, which determined that the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority will not have a right-of-way across BLM- and NPS-managed lands. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area* - On July 4, the park started running the Charles Hall Ferry between Bullfrog and Halls Crossing for the first time in several years. It had been closed due to low lake levels. The ferry will run four round-trips Thursdays through Sundays. It is operated by the Utah Department of Transportation because it is considered a State Highway Route. Source: [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#)
- *Grand Teton National Park* - The *Jackson Hole News and Guide* published [an article](#) about the tensions surrounding grazing leases in the park in the wake of new fencing being built in Elk Ranch Flats. The grazing rights are preserved in the park's enabling legislation. Source: *Jackson Hole News and Guide*
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - The NPS issued a prospectus for the operation of LeConte Lodge, an off-grid backcountry lodge, supplied by helicopters and llamas. Proposals are due September 5. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - The park is preparing for a major upgrade to the Kīlauea Visitor Center, starting "as early as this September." Upgrades will include accessibility improvements, the addition of a covered pavilion, expanded visitor-use area, and new exhibits that will be in both English and 'Ōlelo Hawai'i. The project contract is expected to go out for bid in July. The project will take "up to two years" to complete, with a full closure of the visitor center during that time. A temporary visitor contact station and Hawai'i Pacific Parks Association store will be located adjacent to the historic ball field near Kilauea Military Camp. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)
- *Independence National Historical Park* - On July 3, the park announced the opening of a mobility ramp on Independence Square. For the first time in over 20 years, visitors that use wheelchairs now will be able to enter the square without going through a security screening (where the only accessible ramp had been previously). The project was completed in partnership with the Independence Historical Trust. Source: [Independence National Historical Park](#)
- *Isle Royale National Park* - On June 12 at Rock Harbor, the park began flying the Gichi Onigaming flag, the flag of the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. The flag will be permanently flown next to the American flag. The Band's flag has flown at Washington Harbor since 2021. The flag raising comes as a formal request from the Band and honors that Isle Royale is a Traditional Cultural Property of the Band. A celebration was held to honor the occasion, including traditional Anishinaabe music and a feast featuring traditional foods, supported by the National Parks of Lake Superior Foundation and Aramark Destinations/Rock Harbor Lodge. Source: [Isle Royale National Park](#)
- *Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail* - The NPS is collaborating with the Lewis and

Clark Trust, Inc., and Terrain360 to map 507 miles of the Yellowstone River utilizing "state-of-the art 360° ultra-high-definition spherical imagery." Source: [Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail](#)

- *Minidoka National Historic Site* - The *International Examiner* published [an article](#) about the recently-approved Lava Ridge wind farm, to be located on Bureau of Land Management lands adjacent to the park and in the historic footprint of the camp. The article focuses on the reactions of the descendants of camp prisoners to the wind farm approval. (*Editor note: The Coalition has consistently advocated against the wind farm. See our 6/10/24 [press release](#) condemning the BLM's decision.*) Source: *International Examiner*
- *Minute Man National Historical Park* - Park archaeologists recently discovered five historic musket balls fired during the event known as "The Shot Heard Round the World" in April 1775 at the North Bridge battle sight. They were found during "compliance activities in preparation for the park's Great American Outdoors Act project." Source: [WCVB](#)
- *Mount Rainier National Park* - This summer, in honor of the park's 125th anniversary, there will be a composer-in-residence for the first time in park history. The artist, Stephen Lias, will spend several weeks in the park and composing classical music. Stephen has composed music for several other parks in the past, including Big Bend National Park, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, and Yosemite National Park. Source: [Seattle Times](#)
- *New Philadelphia National Historic Site* - The New Philadelphia Association has signed over a nearly-25-acre parcel of land off County Road 2 in Barry, Illinois, to the NPS. It is the first property in the park to be owned by the NPS. Source: [My Journal Courier](#)
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - The *Los Angeles Times* published [an article](#) about the "S.S. Point Reyes," an abandoned fishing boat from the 1990s that has become a popularly photographed icon. The boat has deteriorated over time due to storms and tides, as well as vandalism. The park has stated that it will eventually be removed. Source: *Los Angeles Times*
- *Saratoga National Historical Park* - The Saratoga County (NY) Board of Supervisors recently passed a resolution requesting Congress and the NPS rename the park to Saratoga National Battlefield Park as the county plans for the 250th anniversary of the Battles of Saratoga. The park's Public Information Officer, Garrett Cloer, stated that the park has no legal authority to change the name or request a name change: "Name changes are solely the role of Congress." Source: [WNYT](#)
- *Stonewall National Monument* - On June 28, the 55th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, the park's first visitor center opened. President Joe Biden and musician Elton

John both gave remarks in the opening ceremony. Source: [ABC News](#)

- *Tribal Heritage Grant Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On July 8, the NPS announced \$623,077 in grants for 10 projects that support the protection of culture for American Indian Tribes, Native Alaskans, and Native Hawaiians. Funding for the program comes through federal oil lease revenue from the Outer Continental Shelf via the Historic Preservation Fund. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Wind Cave National Park* - The park has mapped several new passages of cave, bringing Wind Cave to 167 miles. It is now the sixth longest cave in the world. The discoveries have been made by park staff, volunteers, the Paha Sapa Grotto, and the Colorado Grotto (the Grottos are chapters of the National Speleological Society). Air pressure studies suggest that only five to ten percent of the cave is currently mapped. Source: [South Dakota Searchlight](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - The park published [a press release](#) about the white bison calf born in the park in June (see [6/12/24 Coalition Report](#)). The release acknowledges the rareness and significance of a white bison calf being born, as well as noting that the calf has not been photographed or seen by visitors or staff since its birth. Source: Yellowstone National Park
- *Yosemite National Park* - *MLT News* published [an article](#) about Lora Hein, "the first woman backpacking ranger in NPS history." Lore became a backcountry ranger in Yosemite in 1973. She later worked at North Cascades National Park for a time. Source: *MLT News*

Personnel Changes

- *Denver Service Center* - Chris Lewis was selected as the new division chief for design and construction for the Eastern Team. Chris worked at the Denver Service Center from 1993 to 2000, then 2007 to present, most recently as the branch chief of the design and construction division. Chris started his new role on June 30. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Honouliuli National Historic Site* - Christine Ogura has been selected as the new superintendent. Christine has 14 years of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service experience, as well as experience supporting Congressional efforts to acquire NPS lands and management of the Hawai'i Division of Forestry and Wildlife's Watershed Partnerships program. Christine will begin her new role in September. Source: [National Park Service Pacific West Region](#) (Regions 8, 9, 10, and 12)

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

- Ken Kaax̱kaatuklagé Grant passed away recently. Ken captained Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve's research vessel and served as a management assistant for many years. He was honored by the park for his efforts "working on behalf of the Huna clans to strengthen relationships with the National Park Service; preserve Lingít tradition, protocols, and language; and restore clan connections to Homeland." Source: [Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve](#)
- Albert "Al" H. Radmann, 100, passed away on July 6. Al worked for the NPS for a "brief stint" in Glacier National Park. Source: [Mueller-Bies Funeral Home](#)

Retired

- On July 1, Leigh Welling retired as the superintendent of Wind Cave National Park. Leigh worked for the NPS for over 21 years, including time in Glacier National Park, as the lead of NPS climate change programming, and as regional chief scientist and associate regional director for science, communication, and partnerships for the Alaska Region. Source: [KCSR/KBPY](#)

In the News

- On July 9, Walt Dabney gave a talk about "Our Public Lands - Their History and Future" at the Grouse Mountain Lodge in Whitefish, Montana. Walt worked for the NPS for 30 years, including as superintendent of the Southeast Utah Group of parks (Arches, Canyonlands, Hovenweep, and Natural Bridges). He left the NPS in 1999 to work for Texas Parks and Wildlife as the Director of State Parks, retiring in 2010. He has been giving this talk on public lands "for several years." Source: [Hungry Horse News](#)
- Alexander Kind recently was hired as a hydrologic technician at the New Hampshire Office of the U.S. Geological Survey's New England Water Science Center. Alexander worked as a wildland firefighter at the NPS in Summer 2022. Source: [U.S. Geological Survey](#)

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](#)
- *Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, Kenai Fjords National Park, Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park,*

- and Sitka National Historical Park* - Public comment is [open through July 21](#) on a fire management plan for the five park units. Source: [Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Curecanti National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through July 29](#) on a proposal to increase wilderness permit fees for Black Canyon of the Gunnison and group campsite fees for Curecanti. Source: [Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park](#)
 - *Blackwell School National Historic Site* - Public comment is [open through July 12](#) on a foundation document for the park. Source: [The Big Bend Sentinel](#)
 - *Buffalo National River* - Public comment is [open through July 31](#) on an Accessibility Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. Source: [Buffalo National River](#)
 - *Castillo de San Marcos National Monument* - Public comment is [open through July 17](#) on a plan to raise and rehabilitate failing sea walls at the park. Source: [Castillo de San Marcos National Monument](#)
 - *Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area* - The NPS, Federal Highway Administration, and the Georgia Department of Transportation are proposing to construct two additional bridges at the I-285/Chattahoochee River crossing to accommodate new express lanes. Public comment to the Georgia Department of Transportation is [open through July 29](#). Source: [Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area](#)
 - *First State National Historical Park* - Public comment is [open through August 1](#) on a comprehensive trail plan for the Brandywine Valley unit of the park. Source: [First State National Historical Park](#)
 - *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through August 15](#) on a plan to rehabilitate the parking lots at Stinson Beach. Source: [Golden Gate National Recreation Area](#)
 - *Grand Teton National Park* - Public comment is [open through August 12](#) on "draft desired conditions for the park and specific management areas" with regards to growing visitation. Source: [Grand Teton National Park](#)
 - *Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park* - Public comment is [open through July 12](#) on a proposal to redesign use patterns on Kennesaw Mountain Drive, including expanded shuttle bus operations, specified hours for bicycle use, and a wide pedestrian lane. Source: [Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park](#)
 - *Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park* - Public comment is [open through July 24](#) on a Chilkoot National Historic Trail Comprehensive Management Plan. Source:

[Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park](#)

- *Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway* - Public comment is [open through July 16](#) on a proposed site plan for the Fairy Falls Day Use Area. Source: [Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway](#)

Other Department of the Interior News

- *Alaska protections in tact* - On June 27, the Department of the Interior released a Final Environmental Impact Statement that analyzed a proposed revocation of existing withdrawals on 28 million acres of Bureau of Land Management lands in Alaska. The "no action" alternative was selected, leaving current protections in place. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$621.2 million in PILT funds* - On June 26, the Department of the Interior announced that 1,900 state and local governments will receive \$621.2 million in Payments in Lieu of Taxes funding for tax-exempt federal lands they administer. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$127 million for orphaned oil and gas wells* - On June 26, the Department of the Interior awarded \$126.7 million in funding for plugging and inventorying orphaned oil and gas wells in five states. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$120 million for climate resilience among Tribes* - On July 9, the Department of the Interior announced \$120 million in new Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act funding to support Tribal communities for planning, adapting, or responding to climate-related environmental threats. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Transfer of subsistence management office* - On June 27, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland issued Secretary's Order 3413, which will transfer the Office of Subsistence Management from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Policy, Management and Budget, starting on July 25. The move is intended to allow federally qualified subsistence users the "opportunity for meaningful engagement in its implementation." Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Offshore wind lease sales* - The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management announced an offshore wind energy lease sale in the Central Atlantic, including one area offshore of Delaware and Maryland and one area offshore of Virginia. The areas are to be auctioned on August 14. On July 2, the Department of the Interior also announced the approval of the Atlantic Shores South offshore wind energy project offshore of New Jersey, which is expected to generate 2,800 megawatts of electricity. 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.

Senate Actions

June 24 through July 5 – The Senate met in pro forma sessions as it was in recess for the Fourth of July holiday period.

House Actions

June 26 – The Committee on Natural Resources held a markup on H.R. 8790, the "Fix Our Forests Act." H.R. 8790 ordered reported, as amended. Among other provisions, the bill establishes the Community Wildfire Risk Reduction Program as well as a Fireshed Center, both of which would have a representative from the National Park Service serving. [Editor note: See "Coalition Actions" above regarding the Coalition's opposition to the bill.]

June 27 – The Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing on the following:

- H.R. 390, the "Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Enhancement Act"
- H.R. 3971, the "Flatside Wilderness Additions Act"
- H.R. 6826, 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, to expand the boundaries of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area to include Lafourche Parish, Louisiana
- H.R. 8206, to ensure that Big Cypress National Preserve may not be designated as wilderness or as a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System, and for other purposes
- H.R. 8219, the "Lahaina National Heritage Area Act."

Testimony was heard from Representatives Hill, Franklin, Tokuda and Mfume; Joy Beasley, Associate Director, Cultural Resources, Partnerships, and Science, National Park Service, Department of the Interior; Katherine Andrews, Director, Office of Outdoor Recreation, Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism, Little Rock, Arkansas; and public witnesses.

June 28 – Read a letter from the Speaker wherein he designated the period from Friday, June 28, 2024, through Sunday, July 7, 2024, as a "district work period" under section 3(z) of House Resolution 5.

June 28 – The Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies held a markup on the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25). The Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, FY25 was forwarded to the full Committee, without amendment.

The bill provides a total appropriation for the National Park Service in FY25 of \$3.12 billion, which is \$209.8 million (6.3%) below the FY24 enacted level and \$461 million below the President's budget request.

Within the total appropriation of \$3.12 billion in discretionary appropriations, the bill has the following funding levels in the different NPS accounts:

- Operation of the National Park System - \$2.709 billion, which is \$171 million less than Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) and \$300 million less than the President's budget request.
- National Recreation and Preservation - \$89.56 million, which is \$1.64 million less than FY24 and \$5.1 million more than the President's budget request.
- Historic Preservation Fund - \$168.9 million, which is \$19.7 million less than FY24 and \$17.5 million more than the president's budget request.
- Construction - \$135.6 million, which is \$36;6 million less than FY24 and \$101.6 million less than the President's budget request.
- Centennial Challenge - \$12 million, which is the same as for FY24 and \$1 million less than the President's budget request.

In addition to the amounts shown above, mandatory funding of \$900 through the Land and Water Conservation Fund will be appropriated as required by the Great American Outdoors Act. Additionally, approximately \$1.33 billion will be appropriated for the Legacy Restoration portion of that act to help the National Park Service address its deferred maintenance backlog. Details of the final allocation of those funds will come when the appropriations committee releases its report on the bill approved by the subcommittee.

In addition to the funding levels noted above, the bill also includes the following administrative provisions of note:

- Sec. 119 extends funding for the Historic Preservation Fund through FY25.
- Sec. 124 states that the final environmental impact statement for the Lava Ridge wind project adjacent to Minidoka National Historic Site shall have no effect.
- Sec. 125 continues the prohibition on any federal spending for prohibiting the use of lead ammunition or tackle on federal land and water.
- Sec. 132 prohibits the use of any federal funds to implement regulations regarding the establishment of a nonessential experimental population of grizzly bear in the North Cascades Ecosystem.
- Sec. 142 prohibits funding by the National Park Service to provide housing to individuals without lawful status under immigration laws.
- Sec. 143 requires the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the National Park Service, to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 3 et seq.), prior to approving an operations permit for the purpose of conducting or proposing to conduct non-federal oil or gas operations within Big Cypress National Preserve.
- Sec. 421, extends the authorization for the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, which provides the land management agencies with authority to collect fees, for an additional year through October 1, 2026.

- Sec. 448 prohibits the use of federal funding for the American Climate Corps.
- Sec. 449 prohibits the use of federal funding to implement a host of climate change executive orders.
- In addition to the section notes above, there are several sections prohibiting federal funding for implanting protections for various plant and animal species under the Endangered Species Act, as well as provisions affecting pay rates for wildland firefighters that could potentially affect individual parks or programs.

[Editor note: See "Coalition Actions" above for the Coalition's opposition to drafted amendments to appropriations bills that would scale back environmental protections.]

July 1-5 – The House met in pro forma sessions as it was in recess for the Fourth of July holidays.

Incidents

Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.

Acadia National Park

Climber rescue

A 24-year-old rock climber slid and fell about fifty feet down a rock face in an area around South Bubble Trail near Jordan Pond. The NPS and Mount Desert Island Search and Rescue performed a high angle rescue. The individual then was able to walk off the trail and transported themselves to a local hospital. Source: [WABI](#)

Acadia National Park

Hiker rescues

On June 25, a 71-year-old fell and broke a leg on the South Bubble summit. Personnel from the NPS, Friends of Acadia Summit Stewards, Mount Desert Island Search and Rescue, and Bar Harbor Fire Department responded and performed a carry-out. The individual was then transported to Mount Desert Island Hospital via ambulance.

Later that day, a 60-year-old fell and sustained a knee injury on the Gorham Mountain Trail. Personnel from the NPS, Mount Desert Island Search and Rescue, and Bar Harbor Fire Department responded and performed a carry-out. The individual was transported to the Mount Desert Island Hospital via ambulance. Source: [WDEA](#)

Cape Cod National Seashore

Graffiti

Some time during the last two weeks of June and early July, graffiti reading "Bird Nazis" was tagged on "multiple park features," including a directional sign, trail sign, all terrain vehicle, and a bike rack in the areas of Herring Cove Beach and Wood End Marsh in Provincetown, Massachusetts. The park is looking for any information the public may

have. Source: [Cape Cod National Seashore](#)

Death Valley National Park

Motorcyclist heat fatality, illness

On July 6, a group of six motorcyclists experienced heat illness while traveling through Badwater Basin during 128F temperatures, an all-time record for July 6. One of the individuals passed away, one was treated for severe heat illness and transported to advanced medical care in Las Vegas, Nevada. Four others were treated onsite and released. Emergency medical flight helicopters were unable to respond due to temperatures exceeding 120F. The incident was supported by responders from the NPS, Pahrump, NV, Death Valley Natural History Association, Inyo County (CA) Sheriff's Office, Inyo County Coroner, and the Southern Inyo Fire Protection District from Shoshone, CA.

Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area

Fire

On July 5, a structure fire was reported on the grounds of the Cliff Park Inn and Golf Course. The Westfall Fire Department, Milford Fire Department, and Delaware Township Fire were able to respond and extinguish the fire. NPS Wildland Fire crews also ensured that the structure fire did not spread into nearby vegetated areas. Delaware Township Ambulance also responded to the incident. One building, built in 1910 and vacant for the last several years, was destroyed. It "was once used as a caretaker's cottage." The cause of the fire is unknown and is under investigation by the NPS and Pennsylvania State Police. Source: [Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area](#)

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area

Missing swimmer

On June 29, a 24-year-old was swimming at Milford Beach about 75 yards from the Pennsylvania shoreline when they disappeared under the water surface. Personnel from Delaware Water Gap, Upper Delaware National Scenic and Recreation River, Milford Fire Department, Milford Ambulance, and dive teams from Port Jervis, Bushkill, Dingman Township, Sparrowbush, and Huguenot responded to search for the individual. On July 1, the individual was found deceased near Milford Beach. Milford Beach was closed to the public during the search and recovery. Source: Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area ([6/30](#), [7/1](#))

Dinosaur National Monument

Rafting fatality

On June 27, a raft in a private, permitted group got pinned on a rock in a rapid on the Green River (Canyon of Lodore) known as Hells Half Mile. A 54-year-old went missing in the incident. The group unpinned and secured the boat, but the individual was not found.

NPS staff were informed and responded by river and by car along the Echo Park Road. That evening, a commercial rafting company found the individual deceased, approximately 10 river miles downstream from the location of the accident. It is believed that the individual lost their life jacket and went unresponsive in the rapid. The commercial raft guides, NPS staff, and Classic Air Medical supported the transportation of the deceased individual to the Moffat County (CO) coroner. Moffat County Advocates, Crisis, Trauma, and Survivor Services also supported the incident. Source: Dinosaur National Monument ([6/28](#), [6/29](#))

Glacier National Park

Multiple car accidents

On the afternoon and evening of June 27, multiple car accidents occurred on Going-to-the-Sun Road. Halfway between "The Loop" and the West Tunnel, one vehicle crossed over the yellow line, causing an oncoming car to swerve and hit an rock outcrop, which disabled the car. Nearly at the same time, at the park entrance, two vehicles collided while merging from two lanes down to one. No injuries were reported for either of those incidents.

Later that evening, a 70-year-old fell asleep and drove off the road near Lake McDonald. Their car hit a tree and became on fire. The driver and a 65-year-old passenger were able to self-extricate and other motorists stopped to assist the incident. The 65-year-old sustained injuries and was sent by Three Rivers Ambulance to Logan Health in Whitefish, Montana. The vehicle fire left a "20x20 yard burn scar" with flames burning up to the crown of several trees. Martin City and Hungry Horse Fire Departments put out the fire. The vehicle was destroyed. Traffic was affected for three hours due to the incidents. Other responding agencies included the Coram Fire Department and an ALERT helicopter. Source: [Glacier National Park](#)

Glacier National Park

Drownings

On July 6, a 26-year-old was hiking on the Avalanche Lake Trail when they went into the creek. They resurfaced briefly before being swept away in the current and into a gorge. Responders searched for the individual on foot and from the air but were unable to locate them. They are presumed dead and believed to be trapped underwater in the gorge.

Later that day, a 28-year-old was swimming with friends in Lake McDonald near the Sprague Creek Campground. They were about 30 yards offshore when they started to struggle, went underwater, and did not resurface. Personnel from the NPS, Three Rivers Ambulance, and an ALERT helicopter responded to the scene and located the individual about 30 yards offshore and 40 feet underwater. The Flathead County (MT) Sheriff's dive team recovered the individual's body that evening. Source: [KPAX](#)

Glacier National Park

Trout plan lawsuit

On July 1, the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service received notice of a pending lawsuit by the Friends of the Wild Swan and the Council on Wildlife and Fish for the agencies' plan to relocate bull trout, a federally threatened species, to Gunsight Lake. The park has completed an environmental assessment that shows "no significant adverse impacts." The litigants claim that it is an illegal plan to create an experimental population, which should only be done by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Source: [KPAX](#)

Grand Canyon National Park

Hiker fatality

On June 29, a 69-year-old hiker collapsed and went unconscious while hiking on the River Trail halfway between Silver Bridge and Black Bridge. The individual was attempting to reach Phantom Ranch for an overnight stay. Bystanders administered CPR until park staff arrived on scene. Further resuscitation efforts were also unsuccessful. Staff from Xanterra Phantom Ranch also supported the incident. The NPS and Coconino County (AZ) Medical Examiner are investigating the incident and cause of death. Source: [USA Today](#), [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

Grand Canyon National Park

Hiker fatality

On July 7, a 50-year-old became unresponsive 100 feet below the rim while hiking up the Bright Angel Trail after an overnight stay at Havasupai Gardens. Bystanders administered CPR and personnel from the NPS and Xanterra Fire and Security responded. Resuscitation efforts were unsuccessful. The incident is being investigated by the NPS and Coconino County (AZ) Medical Examiner. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Appeals court reverses part of Gatlinburg Fire decision

On June 28, a federal appeals court reversed a lower court's ruling that shielded the National Park Service from part of insurers' claims related to the 2016 Gatlinburg Fires that killed 14 people and damaged 2,500 buildings (see [8/23/23](#), [2/8/23](#), and [3/9/22 Coalition Reports](#)). The lower court had ruled that the Federal Tort Claims Act prevents tort suits against the government if there is no federal procedure spelling out a specific course of action for an employee to follow. The appeals court ruled that the park's fire management officer did not follow the use of emergency command procedures and therefore the Federal Tort Claims Act was not applicable. The appeals court affirmed the lower court's dismissal of two other claims against the NPS related to fire management protocols, as well as the dismissal of the NPS' challenge to the insurers' duty-to-warn claims. Source: [Bloomberg Law](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Drowning

On June 24, a 16-year-old lost their footing and fell into the Oconaluftee River behind the Mountain Farm Museum. The individual drowned. Their body was recovered by a swift water rescue team. Responding agencies included the NPS, Cherokee (NC) Fire and Rescue, Cherokee Police Department, and Smokies Life. Source: [Wyoming News Now](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Hikers rescued

On July 3, two hikers fell from Cataract Falls. Both were taken by helicopter to a hospital from the Sugarlands Visitor Center. Personnel from the NPS and Gatlinburg Fire and Rescue supported the incident. Source: [WVLT](#), [WBIR](#)

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

Seismic activity

On July 1, the U.S. Geological Survey's Hawaiian Volcano Observatory recorded a sudden spike in earthquakes southeast of the summit of Kīlauea volcano in the vicinity of Chain of Craters Road between Puhimau and Luamanu craters. No park closures were enacted, but the park warned that temporary closures could occur if seismicity increases. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)

Lake Mead National Recreation Area

Swimming fatalities

On June 24, while boating with friends at Lake Mead, two individuals went for a swim and did not return. On June 28, a team from the NPS and Las Vegas Metropolitan Search and Rescue found both individuals deceased in the Callville Bay area. Source: [Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)

National Mall and Memorial Parks

Food trucks removed

On July 3, several food trucks were towed from 14th Street and Constitution Avenue, Northwest, along the National Mall, for operating in unauthorized areas. Source: [WJLA](#)

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore

Kayaker rescue

On June 27, a 40-year-old kayaker was observed "in distress" after entering the water near Miners Beach in Lake Superior. Three commercial guides responded and "ultimately saved the kayaker, who was already beginning to show signs of shock." Park staff, the U.S. Coast Guard, and Alger County (MI) Sheriff's Department also responded to the incident. The individual was cleared by medical responders shortly after the rescue.

Source: [UpNorthLive](#)

Point Reyes National Seashore

Horse rescue

On June 25, a horse fell and became trapped in a steep ravine adjacent to the Coast Trail near Bass Lake. The rider was uninjured in the fall, but the horse was wedged in dense vegetation. Staff from the NPS, Bolinas (CA) Fire, Marin Humane, the Search and Rescue Unit and Mounted Posse from Marin County Sheriff's Office, and veterinarian Teresa Crocker responded. A technical rope system was rigged to lift the horse about 30 feet up the ravine to the trail above. Once on flat ground, the veterinarian was able to administer medical care and the horse was able to walk several miles to the Palomarin trailhead. A trailer transported the horse to an equine hospital for further treatment. The horse was reported to have recovered well afterward. The NPS and Marin County Search and Rescue teams reported that their attendance at a Large Animal Technical Rescue course the previous year was crucial to their success. Source: [Point Reyes National Seashore](#)

Sagamore Hill National Historic Site

President Roosevelt artifact recovered

On June 27, the park opened a temporary exhibit in the Old Orchard Museum to display a historic silver pocket watch owned by President Theodore Roosevelt. The artifact was stolen while on loan from the NPS to the Wilcox House in Buffalo, New York, in 1987. Thirty-seven years after its theft, the NPS and Federal Bureau of Investigation recovered the object. After its time on display, it will remain in the permanent museum collection at Sagamore Hill. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)

Shenandoah National Park

Fishing ban

On June 30, the park banned fishing throughout the park due to extremely low stream flows and high water temperatures from hot weather conditions. These conditions create low oxygen levels and stressful conditions for fish, and native brook trout populations are already low across the park. The closure will be lifted when stream conditions improve. Source: [Fauquier Now](#)

Whiskeytown National Recreation Area

E. coli

On June 28, the park and Shasta County (CA) Environmental Health Division reported elevated levels of *E. coli* in Clear Creek within the Tower House Historic District. There have been no reports of illnesses yet. Visitors are advised to avoid contact with the water in Clear Creek, around the Tower House Historic District, and at Coggins Flat. The park's swim beaches have reported good water quality and are still considered safe for swimming. Source: [Whiskeytown National Recreation Area](#)

Yellowstone National Park

Shootout with law enforcement

On July 4, park staff responded to the report of a 28-year-old concession employee with a firearm "making threats" at Canyon Village. The individual was reported to be holding someone hostage at gunpoint and had threatened "suicide by cop." Upon contacting the individual, there was an exchange of gunfire between the suspect and law enforcement rangers, leaving the suspect deceased and one ranger injured. The ranger was brought to a local hospital and said to be in "stable condition." The FBI is leading the investigation of the incident, with support from NPS special agents. Canyon Village was temporarily closed for the investigation. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#), [Jackson Hole News and Guide](#), [Powell Tribune](#)

Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve

Structure fire

On June 24, park staff observed the Coal Creek Camp Mess Hall "fully engulfed" in fire. Staff from the divisions of wildland fire, maintenance, and historic preservation established a portable water pump and hoses and worked for several hours to prevent the fire from spreading to the wildland interface. The Bureau of Land Management - Alaska Fire Service and NPS Alaska Region Communication Center also supported the incident. The Coal Creek Camp Mess Hall, Shower House, sluice box, and Bobcat skid-steer were destroyed in the fire. The origin and cause of the fire is unknown and under investigation. Source: [Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve](#)

Zion National Park

Motorcycle fatality

On July 4, a 19-year-old was driving a motorcycle in the Zion-Mt. Carmel Tunnel when they crashed. Personnel from the NPS and the Hurricane Valley Fire District responded quickly and administered CPR. Resuscitation efforts were unsuccessful and the individual was pronounced deceased at the scene. The incident is under investigation by the NPS, Utah Highway Patrol, and Utah Office of the Medical Examiner. Source: [Zion National Park](#)

Zion National Park

Hiker rescues

On June 30, the park's Search and Rescue team responded to an "emergency call at the Narrows." Shortly afterward, a party sent a 911 text message reporting an injured hiker at the left fork of The Subway. Due to the other ongoing incident, Washington County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue was dispatched to manage the Subway incident. A Utah Department of Public Safety Helicopter, Star 8, was sent, and they successfully located the party 1.7 miles from the trailhead for the left fork of The Subway. The patient, traveling with one other person, had an ankle injury, and was airlifted to the trailhead

parking lot, where Washington County personnel provided a splint. The patient declined further medical transport. Star 8 then returned to the site to retrieve the other member of the party, but the individual was no longer on scene. Washington County's personnel set out to locate the missing individual and found them "emerging from the canyon onto the plateau," uninjured. Source: [St. George News](#)

Wildfires

- *Denali National Park and Preserve*

- On June 21, the Foraker Fire was discovered burning near the Foraker River drainage on the south side of the Alaska Range. It was believed to have started with a lightning strike. On June 22, the fire entered park boundaries. As of June 24, the fire was five acres. The fire is being monitored. There currently are no "identified values" designated for protection. Source: [Alaska News Source](#), [Alaska Wildland Fire Information](#)
- On June 27, the Grizzly Fire and East Toklat Fire were discovered, both believed to be lightning-caused. The Grizzly Fire was estimated at 1,158 acres and the East Toklat Fire at 20 acres. Both fires are being monitored with support from the Bureau of Land Management - Alaska Fire Service. Source: [Denali National Park and Preserve](#)
- On June 30, the Riley Fire started one mile north of the park's entrance. The park closed that afternoon and visitors and park staff were evacuated. As of July 8, the fire was 31% contained at 432 acres. On July 6, residents of the Campus Housing area of the park were allowed to return to their homes. The park was expected to reopen on July 10. Riley Creek Campground and Day Use Area and the Horseshoe Lake Trail remained closed due to firefighting activities. Source: [Denali National Park and Preserve](#), [Anchorage Daily News](#)

- *El Malpais National Monument*

- The Encerrita Fire is located approximately 15 miles south-southwest of Grants, New Mexico. It was caused by lightning on June 15. As of July 3, the fire was 2,499 acres and 30% contained, with 107 personnel assigned. Rainfall in the area on June 24 has slowed the spread. The Continental Divide Trail and Zuni-Acoma Trail in the park are both closed. Source: [Inciweb](#), [El Malpais National Monument](#)

- *Katmai National Park and Preserve*

- The American Creek Fire is located in the hills south of Nonvianuk Lake and north of Lake Coville near American Creek. As of July 5, it was estimated at 4,650 acres. It was likely lightning-caused. The fire is being monitored. No structures are currently threatened.
- The Naknek Lake Fire is located approximately nine miles west of Dumphling Mountain and two miles south of Naknek Lake. As of July 5, it was estimated at 26 acres. It was likely caused by lightning. The fire is being monitored. No structures are currently threatened.

- Source: [Katmai National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Noatak National Preserve* - On June 13, two fires were observed in the park by the Galena Fire Management Zone Office:
 - The Tututalak Fire is located 32 miles northeast of Noatak Village and 4 miles of the Kelly River and Noatak River confluence. As of June 17, the Tututalak Fire was about 7,000 acres.
 - The Urgoon Fire is located 22 miles northeast of Noatak Village and 8 miles south of the Kelly River and Noatak River confluence. As of June 17, the Urgoon Fire was 4,264 acres.
 - Both fires are being monitored by the Alaska Interagency Coordination Center by aviation overflights. There currently are no threats to people, property, or Native allotments. Smoke is present in the Lower Noatak River area, and the Eli and Agashashok River drainages. Source: [Noatak National Preserve](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - On July 3, Sentinel Campground, in the Cedar Grove area of Kings Canyon, reopened for the first time since the severe road damage from 2023 winter storms. Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#)
- *Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore* - On June 25, the 63-year-old convicted for diverting the Platte River inside the park in August 2022 (see [9/7/22](#), [6/7/23](#), [7/5/23](#), and [2/21/24 Coalition Reports](#)) was sentenced to a five-year ban from NPS property, \$26,419.93 in fines, and probation. Source: [The Washington Post](#), [9and10news.com](#)

Acknowledgments

This newsletter is supported through Coalition staff and invaluable volunteers:

- Editor: Katie Wallace
- Tech and Production Support: Theresa Manthripragada, Steve Pittleman, Emily Thompson
- Regular Correspondent: Don Hellmann, Chris Soller
- Issue Contributors: Mike Murray, 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

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