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The Coalition Report

Wednesday, May 1, 2024

Coalition Actions

The Coalition issued [a press release](#) supporting legislation introduced by Representative Raul Ruiz to establish the Chuckwalla National Monument.

We issued [a press release](#) in support of the Bureau of Land Management's final Public Lands Rule. The rule directs the BLM to manage for landscape health, allows the establishment of restoration and mitigation leases, and clarifies practices for designating and implementing Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. For more information, please see the Department of the Interior's [press release](#).

Joining with four additional organizations, the Coalition submitted [detailed comments](#) to the Bureau of Land Management on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Utility-Scale Solar Energy Development, which would update the 2012 Western Western Solar Plan. Among other things, the letter expresses concern that the draft will detrimentally effect cultural and natural resources, landscape qualities, and the Old Spanish National Historic Trail.

The Coalition issued [a press release](#) applauding the Bureau of Land Management for selecting "No Action" as the preferred alternative of its final environmental analysis for the Ambler Road project. For more information about the analysis, please see the Department of the Interior's [press release](#).

We submitted [comments](#) to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in support of the draft Land Protection Plan and Environmental Assessment to establish the Southern Maryland

Woodlands National Wildlife Refuge.

The Coalition joined with numerous organizations in [a letter](#) to the U.S. House of Representatives opposing H.R. 6285, the Alaska's Right to Produce Act. The bill was reported from the House Committee on Natural Resources on April 15, 2024.

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.

- *White House proclamation on National Park Week* - On April 19, The White House published [a proclamation](#) for the 2024 National Park Week, highlighting the Biden Administration's commitment to protecting public lands. Source: The White House
- *Sellers honored* - On April 15, a group of current and former NPS staff and public officials unveiled a plaque at the National Trails Office in Santa Fe, honoring NPS historian Richard West Sellers. Richard was a 35-year employee of the NPS and wrote the 1997 book, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, which greatly influenced the agency to think more critically about how to balance natural resource preservation with public access. Richard passed away in 2017. Source: [The Santa Fe New Mexican](#)
- *"A housing crisis is impacting the NPS"* - Sierra published [an article](#) about the dual challenges of maintaining park housing and the skyrocketing cost of housing in gateway communities, resulting in difficulty recruiting and retaining staff. Source: Sierra
- *"The importance of friends groups in national parks"* - Western Slope Now published [an article](#) highlighting the efforts of non-profits supporting national park units. The article highlights Colorado National Monument Association and the Mesa Verde Association. Source: [Western Slope Now](#)
- *Updated amphibian database* - The NPS published [an article](#) about efforts to update NPSpecies, a web-based database, with amphibian occurrences across the National Park System in order to better protect them. A scientific article on the effort was [published recently](#) in the journal *Nature*. Source: National Park Service Office of Communications
- *"Privilege: A required qualification to work with the NPS"* - National Parks Traveler published [an op-ed](#) with this title by Ashley Daffron, a former NPS employee at Arches National Park. The op-ed argues that the NPS' wages, hiring process, and relocation requirements are barriers to diversifying the agency. Source: *National Parks Traveler*

- *Wilderness Act "preventing effective land management"* - *Zócalo Public Square* published [an op-ed](#) by conservation biologists Daniel T. Blumstein and Thomas B. Smith arguing that provisions of the Wilderness Act have hindered effective science and resource management, and that the law needs a rewrite or a reinterpretation. Source: *Zócalo Public Square*
- *Partnership Awards* - The Public Lands Alliance announced the recipients of its 2024 Partnership Awards, including a Public Lands Partner Award to Hawai'i Pacific Parks Association, Friends of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, and Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park; an Agency Leadership Award to Yellowstone National Park Superintendent Cam Sholly; Innovative Product Awards to Jefferson National Parks Association and Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy; Outstanding Public Engagement Awards to Grand Canyon Conservancy and Smokies Life; and Publication of the Year Awards to Western National Parks Association and Alaska Geographic. Source: [Public Lands Alliance](#)
- *"World-class museums at national parks"* - The AARP published [an article](#) about lesser-known museums inside of national park units, including the National Immigration Museum at Ellis Island (part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument), the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum and Visitor Center, the Yavapai Geology Museum at Grand Canyon National Park, the Quarry Exhibit Hall at Dinosaur National Monument, and the Mesa Verde Visitor and Research Center (Mesa Verde National Park). Source: AARP
- *Interview with "Who Runs This Park" podcaster* - *Mountain Journal* published [an interview](#) with Maddie Pellman, a podcaster who interviews superintendents of national parks. Source: *Mountain Journal*

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Acadia National Park* - The *Mount Desert Islander* published [an article](#) about an upcoming decision about whether or not to repair a portion of Seawall Road adjacent to the park's Seawall picnic area after it has repeatedly washed out due to sea level rise and storm surges. The road currently is closed. Discussions between the Maine Department of Transportation, the NPS, leadership from Southwest Harbor and Tremont, and the public are ongoing. Source: *Mount Desert Islander*
- *African American Civil Rights Grant Program* (and NPS-administered program) - On April 30, the NPS awarded \$23.4 million for 39 projects in 16 states and the District of Columbia for the African American Civil Rights grant program, part of the Historic Preservation Fund. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Amache National Monument* - The Bureau of Land Management published an

article about the efforts of their Colorado Cadastral Survey to conduct the official land survey that allowed for the establishment of Amache as the newest NPS unit.

Source: [Bureau of Land Management](#)

- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - On April 17, the park announced that it is seeking vendors to provide mobile food and beverage service for the 2024 season at Mabry Mill (milepost 176.2). Applications for the Commercial Use Authorization are due May 15. The park is working on a new, long-term contractor for the Mabry Mill Restaurant and Gift Shop after 2024. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - The park announced that it is implementing an increase for camping and associated fees, starting on May 24. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)
- *Cape Cod National Seashore* - On May 3, the park, in coordination with partner Eastern National, will host a public ceremony to unveil and rededicate the recently-restored Highland Light in Truro. The rehabilitation took several years and was completed by Henry General Contractors, Inc. Source: [Cape Cod National Seashore](#)
- *Cape Cod National Seashore* - *The Provincetown Independent* published [an article](#) about the NPS' Arborist Incident Response teams, a group of certified individuals from across the National Park System that can be called in to do specialized tree work, such as after a natural disaster or during extensive maintenance. A group of 14 AIR members recently spent a week in Cape Cod protecting historic structures from hazard trees. Source: *The Provincetown Independent*
- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - On May 1, the park will open the new Oregon Inlet Fishing Center at the marina on Pamlico Sound south of Nags Head. The original building had been damaged heavily in a storm in 1962. The park entered into a 20-year lease agreement in 2019 with Oregon Inlet Fishing Center, LLC, to rent the 61-slip marina and to repair or rebuild a new marina building. The new 10,000-square-foot fishing center cost \$4 million and was completed by Renaissance Construction. It will house a restaurant, administrative offices, and a meeting space. The old marina building will be torn down later this spring. Source: [The Virginian-Pilot](#)
- *Christiansted National Historic Site* - The park, in partnership with the Historic Preservation Training Center, recently began a project to repair the plaster and limewash paint of the Stable Yard part of Fort Christiansvearn. The project will be completed in late May. It is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [Christiansted National Historic Site](#)
- *Death Valley National Park* - On April 29, the park announced that their annual spring season count of Devils Hole pupfish resulted in the most fish observed in 25 years, at 191 individuals. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)

- *Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area* - Resolutions opposing a redesignation of Delaware Water Gap as a national park have been filed in both the New Jersey State Assembly and State Senate. Opponents of the redesignation are concerned it would prohibit or limit resource extraction, as well as hunting and fishing. Source: [New Jersey Herald](#)
- *Denali National Park and Preserve* - *The High Route* published [an interview](#) with South District Ranger Tucker Chenowith about mountaineering trends, including a movement toward more skiing and more inexperienced ascents. Source: *The High Route*
- *Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley National Monument* - On April 17, the NPS officially designated the Emmett Till Interpretive Center as a philanthropic and educational partner to the park. Source: [WJTV](#)
- *Everglades National Park* - The *SunSentinel* published [an article](#) highlighting seven individuals from different walks of life that are working to restore the Everglades. Source: *SunSentinel*
- *Gettysburg National Military Park* - The National Archives' blog, *The Text Message*, [recently featured](#) 1948 and 1950 NPS memos highlighting a "spree of vandalism" at Gettysburg that the FBI was dispatched to investigate. Source: *National Archives: The Text Message*
- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area* - On April 24, a federal appeals court concluded that the Department of the Interior did not violate the National Environmental Policy Act in its use of available data while crafting its 20-year plan for managing water releases from the Glen Canyon Dam. The lawsuit had been pursued by Save the Colorado, Living River, and the Center for Biological Diversity, who felt the plan did not adequately consider climate change studies in its analysis. Source: [AZMirror/Courthouse News Service](#)
- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - Scientists from the California Academy of Sciences recently conducted genetic sequencing on now-extinct Xerces Blue butterflies, a once-bountiful species in the dunes of San Francisco that was crowded out by development in the 1940s. They found the species to be a close relative of an existing population of Silvery Blue butterflies in Monterey County, CA. The Presidio Trust has been working to restore native dune ecosystems in the park, and a group of Silvery Blues was recently released to serve as "an ecological stand-in" for the Xerces Blues. Source: [ABC News](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - On April 24, the park premiered a new film, "We Are Grand Canyon," about the 11 Indigenous Tribes that are connected to Grand Canyon. The 30-minute film was produced by Bristlecone Media and funded by the

Grand Canyon Conservancy. On April 22, the park debuted a film called "HIKE SMART." The 5-minute film features park staff talking about preparedness. It was made possible by the Grand Canyon Conservancy, Xanterra, Delaware North, Bright Angel Bicycles, and Sandcast Media. Source: [Arizona Public Radio](#), [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

- *Grand Canyon National Park* - Purdue University published [an article](#) about Jalyn Gearries, an alumnus of the university's Natural Resources and Environmental Science program. Jalyn was an intern in the park in 2016, and, in 2023, she worked for the NPS as a seasonal biotech invasive species crew lead. She recently began a PhD program that is funded by the NPS, National Science Foundation, and Bureau of Reclamation to support the Glen Canyon Dam Long-Term Experimental and Monitoring Project. Source: Purdue University
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - The park, in coordination with Catalyst Sports, Knox County, Kampgrounds of America Foundation, Friends of the Smokies, and the National Environmental Education Foundation, has announced the expansion of adaptive ranger-led programming in 2024, including hiking and biking trips through the summer and fall. The park also now has four off-road wheelchairs available for visitors to check out and use on park trails. Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)
- *Haleakalā National Park* - The park is seeking to lease houses or apartments with three bedrooms or more to house employees. Leases must be available for one year, with the potential of renewal on an annual basis. The park hopes to have agreements signed by June. Source: [Haleakalā National Park](#)
- *Hampton National Historic Site* - On May 1, the park will begin a one-year pilot program of hosting ticket reservation for mansion tours on Recreation.gov. Source: [Hampton National Historic Site](#)
- *Independence National Historical Park* - The park has been awarded reaccreditation from the American Alliance of Museums, "the highest national recognition for a museum." The park has been accredited since 1985. Source: [Independence National Historical Park](#)
- *Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument* - The *Bangor Daily News* published [an article](#) about the new Tekakapimək Contact Station at the summit of Lookout Mountain, which will open in August. The visitor center has been supported by the NPS, Elliottsville Foundation, the Wabinksi Confederacy and its independent Tribal Nations, and the Friends of Katahdin Woods and Waters. The \$30 million project is being built through private funding and will be donated to the NPS, which will operate it going forward. Source: *Bangor Daily News*
- *Mount Rushmore National Memorial* - The NPS recently partnered with the South

Dakota National Guard to remove fallen trees and debris around the memorial via a Black Hawk helicopter and soldiers from the 19th Engineer Battalion. Source: [South Dakota Public Broadcasting](#)

- *National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom* (an NPS-administered program) - On April 22, the NPS announced 19 new listings in 10 states to the network. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *North Cascades National Park* - On April 25, the NPS and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced a record of decision to publish a final 10(j) rule to reintroduce a "nonessential experimental" population of grizzly bears in the North Cascades ecosystem. The plan calls for three to seven grizzlies moved per year over five to ten years to establish an initial population of 25 bears in the region. There is no timeline yet for when translocation will begin. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Oxon Cove Park and Oxon Hill Farm* - On April 22, the park began a \$1.5 million improvement project on the Oxon Cove Hiker-Biker Trail, including resurfacing the trail, replacing a washed-out pedestrian bridge, replacing culverts, installing trash cans and benches, and planting native tree species. The project is expected to be complete by Fall 2024. Source: [Oxon Cove Park and Oxon Hill Farm](#)
- *Padre Island National Seashore* - On April 19, the park announced that it secured \$153,000 from the NPS Natural Resource Fund Source to investigate the impacts of sea level rise on sea turtles. They will partner with Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi on the research. Source: [My San Antonio](#)
- *Petroglyph National Monument* - On May 3, a new part of the park will open to visitors, called South Point Day Use Area. The trailhead will give new access to the southernmost portion of the volcanic escarpment. Over the next several months, the park will add signs, trash cans, bicycle racks, a shade structure, and benches. Source: [KRQE](#)
- *Pinnacles National Park* - On April 29, the park started a pavement preservation project across most of the roads in the park. Road delays and closures may be in effect through May 17. The project is being funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Source: [Pinnacles National Park](#)
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - The *Marin Independent Journal* published [an op-ed](#) by Jerry Meral arguing for a parking fee to greatly increase the amount of funding available to the park for operations and maintenance. Source: *Marin Independent Journal*
- *Prince William Forest Park* - On April 22, President Joe Biden gave an Earth Day speech about the Environmental Protection Agency's Solar for All program and next steps in the American Climate Corps, a program patterned on the Civilian

Conservation Corps to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Source: [Inside NOVA](#)

- *Reconstruction Era National Historical Park* - In honor of National Park Week, Veterans Affairs honored Army Veteran Michael Trevino, who is the facility manager at Reconstruction Era National Historical Park. Source: [Veterans Affairs](#)
- *Rock Creek Park* - On March 28, the NPS signed a Finding of No Significant Impact for the rehabilitation of the Rock Creek Park Golf Course. It is scheduled to begin in late 2024 and take two years to complete. \$25-35 million in funding for the project will come from National Links Trust, a nonprofit that was awarded a 50-year lease by the NPS in 2020. Twenty environmental groups signed a letter to the NPS against the renovation because it will require the removal of 1,100 trees, harming local habitat and shade opportunities. The NPS has stated that the project will include the planting of hundreds of native trees and 11 acres of new pollinator habitat. Source: [The Washington Post](#)
- *Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* - Congress recently allocated \$963,000 for the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority to acquire properties along the coastal slope of the park between Latigo Canyon and Solstice Canyon to improve wildlife corridors and maintain open space for visitation. Source: [The Malibu Times](#)
- *Shenandoah National Park* - On May 6, the park will begin a project to repair the Cedar Run Trail. The trail is "completely washed out" and currently is hazardous to hikers. The project is expected to take two weeks, and the trail will be closed for the duration. Source: [Shenandoah National Park](#)
- *Theodore Roosevelt National Park* - On April 25, the park announced that it will maintain wild horses in the park. The park had proposed removing them as part of a Livestock Plan Environmental Assessment. The proposal received a lot of media attention and thousands of public comments. The Livestock Plan was terminated "after careful consideration of the information and public comment received during the environmental assessment process." Source: [Los Angeles Times](#)
- *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - On April 19, the park announced its brand-new Junior Ranger program. Source: [Valles Caldera National Preserve](#)
- *Virgin Islands National Park* - On April 22, a federal judge transferred the title of the Caneel Bay Resort to the Department of the Interior. Caneel Bay Acquisitions, LLC ("CBI"), had challenged the park's "Retained Use Estate" (RUE) agreement by donor Laurence S. Rockefeller that dictated the Jackson Hole Preserve maintain use of the property and its facilities for 40 years, ending in September 2023, with transfer of the property to the National Park Service. The RUE was "passed down" from Jackson Hole Preserve to CBI. CBI had offered to terminate the RUE and sell

the resort to the federal government for \$70 million in 2019, arguing that the federal government must pay for the improvements made to the property if it were sold before the RUE expired. This would run counter to the RUE, which stated it could only be sold early to the federal government for one dollar. When the \$70 million offer was rejected in 2022, CBI sued, arguing that the resort legally belonged to CBI because the NPS failed to accept a fair offer prior to the expiration date. An appeal from the plaintiffs is possible. Caneel Bay was heavily affected by a hurricane in 2017 and will require extensive environmental remediation before the park is able to allow visitors to visit the property. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)

- *Virgin Islands National Park* - On April 22, the park reopened the Cruz Bay Visitor Finger Pier. The park dredged the creek and reconstructed the pier. The project was funded by recreation fees. Minor work will continue and may result in temporary closures. Source: [Virgin Islands National Park](#)
- *Virgin Islands National Park, Virgin Islands Coral Reef National Monument* - On April 22, the two parks began a project to repair moorings. It will take about three weeks to complete. The project is being funded by recreation use fees associated with the mooring buoys. Source: [St. Thomas Source](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - The park announced that they are implementing new measures to help stop the spread of aquatic invasive species into park waters, including a 30-day mandatory dry time for sailboats and some types of motorized boats, and a prohibition on watercraft previously fouled by mussels, regardless of dry time. These restrictions go into effect on the park's opening day for boating and fishing, May 25. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

Personnel Changes

- *Gulf Islands National Seashore* - Rick Clark was selected as the new superintendent. Rick has 38 years of NPS experience, most recently as deputy regional director for the Midwest Region. Source: [Gulf Islands National Seashore](#)
- *Little River Canyon National Preserve, Russell Cave National Monument* - Steve Theus was selected as the new superintendent for the two parks. Steve has 31 years of NPS experience, most recently as the deputy superintendent at Cumberland Island National Seashore and Fort Frederica National Monument. Steve will start his new job on May 5. Source: [Russell Cave National Monument](#)

Park People

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

Deceased

- David "Dave" Allen Coey, 82, passed away on April 14. Dave was a tour bus driver in Yellowstone National Park for a time "in his youth." Source: [KZBK](#)
- William Robert "Bobby" Cowger, 75, passed away on April 8. Bobby worked for the NPS for a time after high school. Source: [Southern Maryland News Net](#)
- Ivadess Kimsey Dixon, 90, passed away on April 20. Ivadess "worked a couple of seasons at Glacier National Park" in her retirement. Source: [Legacy/Hayworth-Miller Funeral Home Rural Hall Chapel](#)
- Jerry Austin Eubanks, 87, passed away on March 27. Jerry worked for the NPS for 49 years, including at Natchez Trace Parkway, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Shenandoah National Park, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, Ozark National Scenic Riverways, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and as the superintendent of Gulf Islands National Seashore for about 24 years. Source: [Legacy](#)
- Bob Graham, 87, passed away on April 16. Bob was a former U.S. Senator and Florida Governor. He is credited with protecting the Everglades through state and Congressional initiatives, including the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan in 2000. Source: [Miami Herald](#)
- Edward "Mike" A. Hickey, 76, passed away on April 21. Mike spent 20 years as the chief engineer of the Ranger III boat, taking passengers across Lake Superior to and from Isle Royale National Park. Source: [The Daily Mining Gazette](#)
- Russell "Russ" Raymond Waldorf, 71, passed away on April 13. Russ worked for the NPS at Voyageurs National Park from 1991 until 2014. Source: [Perham Focus](#)
- Richard Monte "Zane" Nance, 88, passed away on April 11. Zane worked for a time in maintenance with the NPS. Source: [Bedford Bulletin](#)
- Randi Iris Zimmerman, 69, passed away on April 16. Randi worked for a time as an interpretive park ranger for the NPS. Source: [Ravalli Republic](#)

In the News

- Milton Chen was selected to give the keynote address and receive an honorary doctorate of education at Northern Michigan University's commencement ceremony on May 4. Milton was the executive director for the George Lucas Educational Foundation for many years. He chaired the education committee for the National Park System Advisory Board for a time and received accolades as an "Honorary Ranger" of the NPS and the Robin W. Winks Award for Enhancing Understanding of National Parks. Source: [Northern Today](#)

Open for Comment

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

- *Badlands National Park* - Public comment is [open through May 15](#) on a Draft Accessibility Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. Source: [Badlands National Park](#)
- *Dinosaur National Monument* - Public comment is [open through June 1](#) on a proposal to increase camping fees. Source: [KSL](#)
- *Harry S Truman National Historic Site* - Public comment is [open through May 27](#) on a Draft Accessibility Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. Source: [Harry S Truman National Historic Site](#)
- *Ice Age National Scenic Trail* - Public comment is [open through May 12](#) on a proposed re-route of the trail in Rusk County (WI) within the Rusk County Forest. Source: [Ice Age National Scenic Trail](#)
- *Lava Beds National Monument* - Public comment is [open through May 5](#) on a proposal to increase camping fees at Indian Well Campground and Group Campsite and to make the group site reserveable on *Recreation.gov*. Source: [Lava Beds National Monument](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - Public comment is [open through May 23](#) on a proposal to increase camping fees at four reservation campgrounds inside the park. Source: [Longmont Leader](#)
- *Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore* - Public comment is [open through May 18](#) on a plan to repair and replace docks at North and South Manitou Islands. Source: [Yahoo!](#)
- *Thomas Edison National Historical Park* - Public comment has been [reopened through May 1](#) on a proposed fee schedule for its electric vehicle charging stations. A January public comment period press release incorrectly transposed the proposed rate per kilowatt hour. Source: [Thomas Edison National Historical Park](#)

Other Department of the Interior News

- *New Mexico lands protected* - On April 18, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland signed Public Land Order 7940, withdrawing mineral rights from 4,200 acres of Bureau of Land Management lands near Placitas, New Mexico. The lands have "significant cultural ties" to the Pueblos of San Felipe and Santa Ana. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Protections in petroleum reserve* - On April 19, the Bureau of Land Management

finalized the Management and Protection of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska rule that will set aside over 13 million acres of "Special Areas" in the western Arctic to support subsistence use by Alaska Native communities. Source: [Department of the Interior](#) (Editor note: This press release also mentions the Ambler Road project, which we've linked to above in "Coalition Actions" and "Around the Parks.")

- *\$95 million for water and ecosystems* - On April 18, the Department of the Interior announced \$95 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding available for locally led projects focused on water conservation and efficiency, climate adaptation, and river and watershed restoration. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$70 million for fish passage* - On April 23, the Department of the Interior announced over \$70 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for 43 projects in 29 states under the National Fish Passage Program. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Offshore energy updates* - On April 24, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland announced a five-year offshore wind leasing schedule, including 12 potential lease sales through 2028 in the Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, Pacific, and waters off of U.S. territories. Also on April 24, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement finalized updated regulations for renewable energy development on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf. The rule aims to streamline bureaucracy and enhance compliance. Source: Department of the Interior ([wind leasing schedule](#), [new rule](#))

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

April 16 – The Senate passed Senate Resolution 645 designating the week of April 20 through April 28, 2024, as National Park Week.

House Actions

April 17 – The House Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies held a hearing on the Department of the Interior Budget. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, Denise Flanagan (Budget Director for Interior) and Joan M. Mooney (Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary) testified before the subcommittee.

Incidents

Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.

Chickasaw National Recreation Area

Tornado

On April 27, "portions" of the park were directly impacted by a tornado, and the whole park is experiencing flooding. The park is currently closed to address storm impacts.

Source: [Chickasaw National Recreation Area](#)

Curecanti National Recreation Area

Emergency bridge closure

On April 18, a safety inspection of a bridge on U.S. Highway 50 that crosses Blue Mesa Reservoir near Dillon Pinnacles revealed "anomalies." The inspection was required due to known issues with similarly constructed bridges elsewhere in the country. The Federal Highway Administration and bridge engineering experts asked the Colorado Department of Transportation to close the bridge for safety. Colorado Lieutenant Governor Dianne Primavera declared it a disaster emergency, which will allow for a statewide response and federal assistance for supplemental funding. There is no estimated date for reopening. Detours will add six to eight hours of travel time between the communities of Montrose and Gunnison, which are both gateway communities to Curecanti and Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. Source: [Montrose Press](#), [CBS News](#)

Death Valley National Park

Two Fires

Just after midnight on April 4, park staff responded to a fire behind the Borax Museum, located within The Ranch at Death Valley, a privately-owned hotel complex. The fire destroyed a historic wooden wagon used in the 1890s to transport borax out of the area. "Old Dinah," a steam engine that pulled the wagon, was adjacent to the fire, but escaped significant damage. That same morning, at about 5:15am, a second fire was reported about 500 feet away from the first fire, inside prefabricated employee housing units that had been delivered, but not yet occupied. Staff from the NPS, Southern Inyo Fire Protection District, Inyo County Sheriff, and California Highway Patrol, responded to the second fire. Two housing units were destroyed and a third was damaged. No one was harmed in either fire. The cause of the fires is unknown and under investigation by Inyo County Sheriff's Office and the California State Fire Marshall. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)

Death Valley National Park

Hiker fatality

On April 5, a 66-year-old individual was hiking with their spouse about a mile up the Mosaic Canyon Trail when he appeared "to have suffered an acute medical event." Other hikers used the satellite SOS function on their iPhone to call for help. A registered nurse

and nurse practitioner who were also hiking in the area attempted to revive the individual. Park staff arrived soon after to join the ongoing resuscitation efforts, but they were not successful. The deceased individual was carried to the trailhead by an NPS Search and Rescue team and transferred to the care of the Inyo County Coroner. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)

Denali National Park and Preserve

Mountaineering accident

On April 25, two individuals, aged 52 and 30, were climbing on-rope up Mt. Johnson, a route of mixed rock, ice, and snow. The pair fell about 1,000 feet. Another climbing party on the peak witnessed the fall and notified park staff. The party then descended to the fallen climbers and found the 52-year-old deceased. The party tended to the injuries of the other individual and kept them warm through the night. The following morning, the park's high altitude helicopter and two mountaineering rangers utilized a short-haul rescue to extract the individual. They were taken to Talkeetna, then flown to an Anchorage hospital for advanced medical care. Deteriorating weather prevented recovery of the deceased individual the same day. The following morning, April 27, the helicopter and rangers were able to return to recover the deceased individual. Source: [Denali National Park and Preserve](#)

Gateway Arch National Park

Sexual assault charge

On April 17, a 35-year-old was indicted on one count of sexual abuse. They are accused of assaulting an individual on December 6, 2023. The individual reported the incident the same day. Metro Transit surveillance cameras caught the incident on camera. The case was investigated by staff from the park, the NPS' Investigative Services Branch, and the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department. The suspect is currently in custody. Source: [KSDK](#)

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Grand Canyon National Park

Missing person

On April 21, the truck of a 58-year-old was found "abandoned" at Lee's Ferry. It is believed that the individual may have attempted to float the Colorado River into the Grand Canyon on a self-made wooden raft with their dog. The park is looking for any information the public may have. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Grand Canyon National Park

Dam infrastructure damaged

The Bureau of Reclamation recently discovered damage in the penstocks that allow water to pass out of Lake Powell. Damage includes sediment, thinning of the pipes, and cavitation (formation and collapse of air bubbles in flowing water that can pit and tear

metal). To reduce additional damage, the BOR is requiring that flows be reduced in the event of low reservoir levels. The BOR is working with its engineers to come up with a solution, including utilizing scale models in a laboratory. It is unclear how long the repairs will take. Source: [Los Angeles Times](#)

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

Chronic Wasting Disease

On April 23, the park announced that two white-tailed deer inside the park had tested positive for chronic wasting disease. It is the first CWD-positive detection for a national park unit in West Virginia. Source: [New York Post/FOX Weather](#)

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

Earthquakes

On April 29, Kīlauea volcano experienced a "significant spike" in earthquakes. It is not erupting, but the park has closed several areas that would put visitors and staff at risk if an eruption occurs. According to the U.S. Geological Survey's Hawaiian Volcano Observatory, is not possible to know if this increase will lead to an eruption in the near future or remain confined below ground. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)

Kenai Fjords National Park

Skiers rescued

On April 19, six skiers on a multi-day trek across the Harding Icefield from Exit Glacier to Bradley Lake became stranded due to severe weather. They were able to shelter in a snow cave. Due to poor visibility and high winds, a rescue was not possible until the following day. The following morning, an Alaska Air National Guard helicopter was able to land near the skiers and take them to a local hospital for evaluation. The rescue was coordinated by the NPS and Alaska Wildlife Troopers. A National Guard HC-130 support plane also assisted in the rescue. Source: [Alaska News Source/KTUU](#)

Lake Mead National Recreation Area

Elevated bacteria again

On April 24, the park announced that water quality monitoring at Arizona Hot Springs showed increased levels of fecal coliform, enterococci, and E. coli, all exceeding local, state, and NPS standards for recreation. The park plans to engage in "enhanced monitoring," and if levels continue to rise, they will close the hot springs until they decrease to safer levels. The area was closed in October 2023 due to high bacteria levels, as well. At that time, sandbags were removed to allow water to flow freely, which allowed bacteria levels to decrease. Source: [8 News Now](#)

National Park Service

Trademark dispute

The Glacier Range Riders, a minor league team based in Kalispell, Montana, and associated with Major League Baseball, applied for several trademarks and logomarks for the team, including a mountain goat wearing a park ranger hat, a bear riding a red bus like the iconic Glacier National Park tour buses, and an arrowhead with the letters "RR" inside. The Department of the Interior filed a protest with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, which rejected arguments that the logo would be confused with that of the NPS. In June, the Interior filed a letter of opposition. A final hearing on the matter is scheduled for 2025. The matter has gained some media attention recently, as U.S. Representative (and former Interior Secretary) Ryan Zinke questioned current Interior Secretary Deb Haaland about the agency's litigation. Source: [Inc.](#)

Yosemite National Park

Rockfall

On April 15, a "substantial" rockfall occurred on the John Muir Trail near the top of Nevada Fall, close to the Panorama Trail junction. About 1,000 feet of trail was covered with boulders, trees, and other debris. No injuries were reported, as the trail was already closed for the winter season. The trail is currently closed between Nevada Fall and Clark Point. It will require "significant repair," including drilling and blasting of large boulders. Park staff are assessing the potential for additional rockfall events. Source: [SFGate](#)

Yellowstone National Park

Visitor-bison encounter

On April 21, a 40-year-old was observed by other visitors "harassing" a herd of bison, including kicking one in the leg. Rangers responded to the scene and found the suspect's vehicle near the West Entrance before stopping it in the town of West Yellowstone. The individual was arrested and charged with being under the influence of alcohol to a degree that may endanger oneself, disorderly conduct as to create or maintain a hazardous condition, approaching wildlife, and disturbing wildlife. The driver of the vehicle, a 37-year-old, was also arrested and cited for driving under the influence, interference for failure to yield to emergency light activation, and disturbing wildlife. The 40-year-old sustained "minor" injuries from the bison encounter. They were treated at a medical facility, released from care, then taken to the Gallatin County Detention Center in Bozeman, Montana. On April 22, the individuals pleaded not guilty to the charges. Source: [KRTV](#)

Yellowstone National Park

Skier rescue

On April 24, a 55-year-old and one other individual skied about a mile into the backcountry in the Fairy Falls area near Old Faithful before the 55-year-old incurred an injury. They made an emergency call. Rangers skied in, and, upon arrival, requested helicopter assistance from Teton County Search and Rescue. The helicopter was able to

land nearby and load both individuals into the ship. They were flown to a landing zone on the Grand Loop Road and the patient was transferred to a waiting ambulance. Source:

[Local News 8](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Death Valley National Park* - On April 26, the park celebrated the end of the emergency phase of flood repairs after the August 2023 rain event that damaged 1,323 miles of roads and several utilities. Steel Pass and Wildrose Charcoal Kilns were the most recent reopenings. The park thanked the staff who supported the effort, including 152 Death Valley employees, 256 NPS staff from other units, the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe, Caltrans, the Federal Highway Administration, Inyo County, multiple contractors, and the neighboring communities. Permanent repairs will begin later this year, including major repairs at Salt Creek, Titus Canyon, Lower Wildrose, and Darwin Falls. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - A follow-up interview with the 35-year-old who was found near Tremont after being lost for several days (see [4/17/24 Coalition Report](#)) revealed further details of the incident. On April 8, the backpacker headed to their "usual camping spot" on a ridge near Tremont. Upon reaching the camping area, they fell "violently ill." As a trained EMT, the individual gave themselves an IV with a bag of saline, and passed out with an open IV line in their arm, bleeding out for "at least eight hours." They did not carry a phone or satellite device. The individual decided to walk toward a creek they knew was usually a 20-minute walk down the mountain. However, the walk took "the entire second day" because they kept collapsing from the lack of blood. They arrived that evening, and began a cycle of drinking water and passing out. The following morning, they made their way down to the parking lot, where a park visitor found them and brought them to an incident command post near the Townsend Wye. They were checked into Blount Memorial Hospital, where they spent several days in the intensive care unit being given multiple blood transfusions and IVs to replenish fluids. Source: [Yahoo!news/Asheville Citizen Times](#)
- *Sequoia National Park* - On April 29, the park began a eight-week repair of the Generals Highway between Hospital Rock and the Giant Forest. Some closures and delays will be in place during the project. Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#)

Correction:

In the 7/17/24 Coalition Report, I made a correction to the 4/3/24 Coalition Report about the profession of the recipient of the Edward B. Danson Award. However, in that correction, I misattributed the awarding agency, which is the Western National Parks Association (it was correctly attributed to the WNPA in the original 4/3/24 announcement). Thank you to Kim Sikoryak for bringing this to my attention.

-Editor Katie Wallace

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

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

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