



The Coalition Report

Wednesday, November 27, 2024

Coalition Actions

The Coalition joined over 60 environmental organizations in [a letter](#) to Congress asking it to advance sensible funding increases for environmental programs in Fiscal Year 2025 without “poison pill” policy riders.

We joined several dozen other organizations in [a letter](#) to key members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and the House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources to express strong support for S.4936, the Minidoka National Historic Site Study Bill, which would delay the Bureau of Land Management’s proposed Lava Ridge wind project until the Government Accountability Office can complete a report on the project’s impacts.

The Coalition joined many other environmental groups in [a letter](#) to key members of Congress urging them to include federal public lands among its priorities in the disaster relief package.

We joined the National Parks Conservation Association, Rocky Mountain Wild, and The Wilderness Society in [comments](#) on the Bureau of Land Management New Mexico Office’s 2025 Second Quarter Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale Draft Environmental Assessment and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact. We urged the BLM to defer parcels with low development potential and to factor greenhouse gas emissions into its leasing decisions.

The Coalition joined the National Parks Conservation Association in providing extensive [comments](#) on the Visitor Access and Experience Plan and Environmental Assessment for Arches National Park.

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.

- *Mojave Desert Network science newsletter* - The Mojave Desert Network Inventory and Monitoring Program published [the Fall 2024 edition](#) of its biannual newsletter, *The Oasis*. Articles focus on its annual Science Symposium, staff updates, hydrologic data from streams and lakes, and opportunities to bolster science content on NPS webpages. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Threats to amphibians in the National Park System* - New research published in *npj Biodiversity* assessed amphibian diversity, rarity, and threats across the National Park System. It summarized that non-native species, such as crayfish and bullfrogs, and increasingly dry conditions under global climate change, are the largest threats to amphibians. It noted that protected areas like national parks play a crucial role in protecting biodiversity for their ability to restore habitat, eradicate non-native species, and provide large tracts of variable habitat for adaptation. Source: [Nature.com](#)
- *CCC legacy in parks* - The National Parks Conservation Association published [an article](#) about the ongoing legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps in national parks, with examples of 10 parks that still utilize CCC-built infrastructure. Source: National Parks Conservation Association
- *Op-ed about returning parks to Tribes under Trump administration* - *Forbes* published [an op-ed](#) by Victor A. Lopez-Carmen suggesting that President Donald Trump's second administration could allow for the return of national park lands to Tribes as part of its efforts to scale back the federal government and utilize market-driven solutions. Victor is Dakota and Yaqui, and has clerked for the Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples in the U.S. House of Representatives. Source: *Forbes*

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Curecanti National Recreation Area* - In January, fees for wilderness permits and group campsites will go up. Source: [Curecanti National Recreation Area](#)
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - On November 13, the park announced the selection of Explor Peaks of Otter, LLC, a subsidiary of ExplorUS, to operate lodging, food service, retail, and shuttle bus services at Peaks of Otter Lodge on a 10-year concession contract. The concession transition will take place in early 2025. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)
- *Cape Cod National Seashore* - A rehabilitation project of the Captain Edward Penniman House was recently completed, including repairs to walls and ceilings and the conservation of historic wallpaper and floor coverings. The project was completed by a Maintenance Action Team from the NPS Historic Architecture, Conservation and Engineering Center, with support from a preservation crew from the Student Conservation Association. The project was funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [Cape](#)

[Cod National Seashore](#)

- *Capitol Reef National Park* - On November 25, the park will reopen the Chimney Rock Trail and parking lot and Scenic Drive to just past the Grand Wash intersection. The parking lot and road have been resurfaced with a first layer of pavement, with a second layer to follow in 2025. The section beyond Grand Wash to Capitol Gorge is expected to open in late December. Source: [Capitol Reef National Park](#)
- *Castillo de San Marcos National Monument* - The second annual Fort Marion Symposium was held November 20-21 in Oklahoma to allow for Tribal members to more actively participate in sharing their ancestral histories. Members of the Cheyenne and Arapaho, Kiowa, and Comanche Nations were imprisoned and transported to Fort Marion (now a part of Castillo de San Marcos) during the Red River War, often under false pretenses. Source: [KOSU](#)
- *Colonial National Historical Park* - On December 2, the park and the Federal Highway Administration will begin a rehabilitation project for three wooden bridges on the Jamestown Island Loop Drive: Pitch and Tar Bridge, Long Bridge, and Blacks Point Bridge. The tour road will be closed to all visitors during construction. It is expected to reopen in Spring 2025. Source: [Colonial National Historical Park](#)
- *Cumberland Island National Seashore* - The NPS recently received a donation of “natural and cultural resources” collected by Carol Ruckdeschel, a biologist who was involved in the creation and preservation of the park. In order to process the collection, the Alberty House, First African Baptist Church, the Settlement, access roads, and surrounding areas were closed from November 18-23. Park staff have begun cataloging and curating the collection. There is no timetable yet for when items might be available to the public. Source: [Cumberland Island National Seashore](#)
- *Dinosaur National Monument* - On January 1, the park will increase camping fees for the first time since 2016. Source: [Dinosaur National Monument](#)
- *Effigy Mounds National Monument* - From October 24-30, representatives from the NPS, U.S. Geological Survey, and local Tribes met to discuss partnerships, particularly as they relate to integrating traditional ecological knowledge with ongoing scientific practices at the park. Source: [U.S. Geological Survey](#)
- *Fort Vancouver National Historic Site* - On November 13, the park announced the completion of a three-year, \$16.5 million rehabilitation of Building 993, one of the historic double infantry barracks on the Parade Ground. The Bureau of Indian Affairs and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service use the building as office space. The project was funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [Fort Vancouver National Historic Site](#)
- *Gettysburg National Military Park* - On November 20, the Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Historic Architectural Review Board approved a certificate of appropriateness for the

Gettysburg Station project, a three-building development that would be situated in the Gettysburg Battlefield Historic District. The NPS has vocalized opposition to the height of the six-story building included in the project due to visual impacts and the precedent it will set for the character of the historic district. The project will next go to the Gettysburg borough council for a vote on December 9. Source: [Gettysburg Times](#)

- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - The Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy will soon begin a \$7.2 million project to upgrade Piers 31-33, the Alcatraz Island ferry landing. The renovation will include adding an indoor-outdoor restaurant and a retail storefront, as well as exhibits highlighting the cultural and natural history of Alcatraz and the greater park. The new operation is expected to be up and running by Summer 2025. Source: [San Francisco Examiner](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - The park recently was awarded several grants from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration through the Arizona Governor's Office of Highway Safety in support of educational materials and bicycle helmets for community members, training and equipment for law enforcement bike patrols, overtime hours and equipment for Route 66 DUI Task Force events, and vehicle-mounted radar units. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - Superintendent Ed Keable recently spoke to students of the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies at Arizona State University, highlighting the park's efforts to work more closely with Tribal members. Source: [ASU News](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - The park recently restored the Noah "Bud" Ogle Cabin, which was damaged in a 2023 storm. The project was funded by Friends of the Smokies and carried out by staff from the park and the Historic Preservation Training Center. Source: [WBIR](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - On November 18, the park and Friends of the Smokies completed a three-year restoration of the Ramsey Cascades Trail, including two new footbridges, new decking and handrails, 151 trail drains, 600 new steps, and the regrading of 2.5 miles of trail surface. Park trail crews were supported by public volunteers and youth crews from the American Conservation Experience and Southeast Conservation Corps. Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - On December 9, the park will begin a rehabilitation of the Cosby Entrance Road from Tennessee State Route 32 to Cosby Campground. The road will be closed to the public while construction is underway. It is expected to be complete in Spring 2025. The project is being funded by the Federal Lands Transportation Program. Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)
- *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - On November 22, the Sulphur Banks Trail reopened after a boardwalk replacement project. The previous boardwalk had been in place since 2000.

The project was completed by a park trail crew and two carpenters from Yellowstone National Park. New accessible interpretive signs will be installed in the coming weeks. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)

- *Indiana Dunes National Park* - The NPS and City of Gary, Indiana, recently completed a new pedestrian bridge at the Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education. This will allow the center to once again host student and public programming. Source: [Indiana Dunes National Park](#)
- *Joshua Tree National Park* - On December 1, the park will increase campground and Keys Ranch tour fees. Source: [Joshua Tree National Park](#)
- *Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument* - The park recently awarded a \$14 million construction contract to Nomlaki Technologies, LLC, of West Sacramento, California, to replace the park's visitor center. The NPS is also working with its associated Tribes and stakeholders to develop new interpretive exhibits. Work began on November 25 and will be complete in late Summer 2026. A temporary visitor center and bookstore will be on site during construction. The project is being funded by the Centennial Challenge program and the National Park Foundation. Source: [Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument](#)
- *Mount Rainier National Park* - On November 20, the park announced two major construction projects that will take place in 2025. The rehabilitation of the Ohanapecosh Campground will be completed during the 2025 visitor season and will be closed for the duration of construction. It is expected to reopen in time for the 2026 season. It is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act, recreation fee revenue, and the National Park Foundation. The rehabilitation of a 2.8-mile section of State Route 123 between Laughingwater Creek and Panther Creek will take place over two years, with completion in October 2026. Temporary closures may take place during the project. The project is being funded through the Federal Highway Administration. Source: [Mount Rainier National Park](#)
- *Mount Rainier National Park* - On November 26, the park announced that it is seeking properties to lease for seasonal staff for March through November, including apartments, houses, or RV trailers outside the park. Source: [Mount Rainier National Park](#)
- *Mount Rushmore National Memorial* - On November 12, the park announced the opening of "Stone Hoop and Ethnobotanical Garden," an outdoor exhibit focused on Lakota ethnobotany, star knowledge, and sacred sites. It was designed in consultation with the park's associated Tribal Nations. The exhibit received \$250,000 in financial support from the National Park Foundation and "logistical support" from the Mount Rushmore Society. Source: [Mount Rushmore National Memorial](#)
- *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* (an NPS-administered program) - On November 11, Indiana University announced that it is repatriating 27 sacred objects to the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma. University officials attended the NAGPRA Summer Training and Education Program earlier this year. Source: [Indiana Public Media](#)

- *Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve* - On November 14, DarkSky International certified the park as an International Dark Sky Park. It is the 46th NPS unit to be certified. Source: [DarkSky International](#)
- *Reconstruction Era National Historical Park* - On November 23, the park celebrated the opening of a new visitor center exhibit, "Lay of the Land." It focuses on a "place-based approach to share stories of locations throughout the southeastern United States to address core themes of Reconstruction." The exhibit was created in collaboration between the NPS, volunteers, community partners, and interns from the Greening Youth Foundation Historically Black Colleges & Universities Internship program. Source: [Reconstruction Era National Historical Park](#)
- *Richmond National Battlefield Park* - KALB published [an article](#) about the park's use of a "barkeologist," a dog trained to sniff out older human remains, in order to locate unmarked burials of enslaved people who worked at Rural Plains. The search dog was hired through Marin Archaeology Consulting. The park has stated that once unmarked graves are identified, they plan to protect and honor the space. There will not be excavations. Source: KALB
- *Rock Creek Park* - On November 12, the park installed a new "armillary sphere" (ancient astronomical instrument) on the lower plaza of Meridian Hill Park. The sphere is a replica of an original installed in the park by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts in 1932. It was removed in the 1970s due to damage and vandalism. The re-creation was installed on the original pedestal. The project was supported by the National Park Foundation and Roger and Susan Gendron. Source: [Rock Creek Park](#)
- *Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway* - The NPS has signed a Finding of No Significant Impact for the proposed site plan for the Fairy Falls Day Use Area. The plan will establish a designated loop trail, enhancing visitor safety and mitigating resource damage by avoiding sensitive areas. Source: [Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway](#)
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - The park recently completed an \$11 million upgrade to the water distribution system in the Lodgepole area. The project was funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#)
- *Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore* - On November 13, the park announced that it is "pausing" the design of Segment 9 of the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail after consultations with the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians. The park stated that "the existing design work will serve as a foundation for future planning efforts, with continued collaboration alongside the Grand Traverse Band and project partners." Source: [Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore](#)
- *Tribal Historic Preservation Program* (an NPS-administered program) - In Fiscal Year 2024, the NPS signed six new Tribal Historic Preservation agreements with Tribes located in six

states. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)

- *Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On November 18, the NPS announced the award of \$500,000 in grants to 20 Network members or prospective members in 14 states for projects related to research, preservation and outreach “related to the Underground Railroad and freedom seekers.” Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - On January 1, the park will resume the collection of park entrance fees for the first time since 2017. Entrance fees had been suspended due to a lack of services available at the time. Services have since been expanded to include more access and programming. Source: [Valles Caldera National Preserve](#)
- *Voyageurs National Park* - From December 1, 2024, to February 28, 2025, the park will accept applications for two-year Commercial Use Authorizations for fishing guides, water taxis, ice fishing shelter rentals, and others. Source: [Voyageurs National Park](#)
- *Wupatki National Monument* - *Arizona Highways* published [an article](#) about the park, including its history, current management, and the ongoing connection of Pueblo groups to the site. Source: *Arizona Highways*
- *Yellowstone National Park* - A new book about Yellowstone was published, *A Place Called Yellowstone: The Epic History of the World’s First National Park* by Randall Wilson. Randall is an environmental studies professor at Gettysburg College. Source: [Bozeman Daily Chronicle](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - *The Spokesman-Review* published [an article](#) about efforts by NPS wildlife biologist David Haines to study and protect bird populations in the park. Source: *The Spokesman-Review*
- *Yosemite National Park* - New research by scientists from the park, University of California, Santa Barbara, University of Colorado, Boulder, and the University of Tennessee was recently published in *Nature Communications*. It shows that that endangered mountain yellow-legged frogs have developed some resistance to the chytrid fungus, and translocating resistant frogs can be a successful model for species recovery on a landscape scale. Source: [University of California News](#)
- *Zion National Park* - The park has had an increase in black bear sightings this year, causing it to change its Lava Point Campground policies to now requiring bear-resistant food storage. The park installed bear boxes at the campground with funds from the Zion Forever Project. Personnel from the park and the Utah Department of Wildlife Resources are monitoring the bears for possible habituation behaviors. Source: [St. George News](#)

Personnel Changes

- *Crater Lake National Park* - Kevin Heatley was selected as the new superintendent at the park. Kevin has worked for the Bureau of Land Management for many years, most recently as deputy chief of the agency's NEPA, Planning and Decision Support Division in Washington, DC. Source: [Pacific West Region \(Regions 8, 9, 10, and 12\)](#)
- *Fort Monroe Authority* - Scott Martin has been selected as the new chief executive officer. Scott was previously the administrator of Chattanooga Tennessee Parks and Outdoors. Source: [Daily Press](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - Kevin Griess was selected as the new superintendent of the parks. Kevin has "25 years of public sector experience," most recently as deputy to the garrison commander at Fort Liberty in North Carolina. He is also a graduate of the Department of the Interior's Senior Executive Service Development Program. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)

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

- Robert "Bob" Armstrong, 81, passed away on September 18. Bob worked with the NPS at Yellowstone National Park for a time in the mid-1960s. His father and uncles also worked at the park for a time. Source: [Legacy/Stenberg Funeral Home - Big Timber](#)
- Inez "Marlene" Sorbe, 82, passed away on October 31. Marlene worked at Bryce Canyon National Park for several summers in college, "where she revived the 'State Show' music program." Source: [East Bay Times](#)

Retired

- Ken Lewis, the head of the division of performing arts at Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts, is retiring this month after 32 years with the National Park Service. His entire NPS career was at Wolf Trap, from 1989-1995 and 1999-2024. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)

In the News

- On November 6, Ryan Tompkins was posthumously given the Francis H. Raymond Award, for his efforts contributing to the management of California's natural resources. Ryan was the lead silviculturist on the Plumas National Forest and sat on many committees and panels working on forest health issues. He began his career researching wildfire impacts for the NPS in 2001. Ryan passed away on May 6, at age 49. Source: [The Plumas Sun](#), [ANR Employee News](#)

Open for Comment

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

- *Carlsbad Caverns National Park* - Public comment is [open through November 30](#) on a proposal to increase tour fees for the first time since 2012. Source: [Carlsbad Caverns National Park](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - Public comment is [open through January 6](#) on a visitor use management plan, particularly focused on access and vehicle and pedestrian congestion. Source: [Glacier National Park](#)
- *Glen Echo Park* - Public comment [will be open from December 4 through January 24](#) on a management plan amendment focused on expanding programming, improving accessibility, exploring environmental sustainability, and addressing wayfinding and circulation issues. Source: [Glen Echo Park](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - Public comment is [open through December 15](#) on a proposed increase for frontcountry camping. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)
- *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - Public comment is [open through December 6](#) on a site management plan for the Kahuku Unit of the park. There is [a storymap](#) for the project. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)
- *Natchez National Historical Park* - Public comment is [open through November 30](#) on a concept plan for the Forks of the Road Slave Market site in Natchez, Mississippi. Source: [The Natchez Democrat](#)
- *Natchez Trace Parkway* - Public comment is [open through January 6](#) on a plan to replace the John Coffee Memorial Bridge over the Tennessee River. Source: [Natchez Trace Parkway](#)
- *National Historic Landmarks* (an NPS-administered program) - Public comment is [open through December 20](#) on a landmark study of American Beach, a historic African American resort community in northern Florida, for possible National Historic Landmark designation. The study is expected to run through Spring 2026. Source: [Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve](#)
- *Olympic National Park* - Public comment is [open through November 30](#) on a Memorandum of Agreement for mitigations related to adverse impacts caused by the rehabilitation of the Hurricane Ridge water system. Source: [Olympic National Park](#)
- *Richmond National Battlefield Park* - Public comment is [open through November 30](#) on the Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis Report Addendum for the selection of a removal

action at the Fort Darling Landfill Site. Source: [Richmond National Battlefield Park](#)

- *Rock Creek Park* - The District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority and NPS have [opened public comment through December 6](#) on a proposal to construct the Piney Branch Tunnel Project within Rock Creek Park, part of the larger DC Clean Rivers Project to better control stormwater and sewage overflow. Source: [Washington Citypaper](#)
- *Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway* - Public comment is [open through December 31](#) on a comprehensive river management plan. Source: [Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway](#)
- *Wupatki National Monument* - Public comment is [open through December 12](#) on a draft wilderness study and environmental assessment. Source: [Wupatki National Monument](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - Public comment is [open through December 3](#) on a proposal for improvements to the Northeast Entrance Road between Tower Junction and the northeast entrance boundary. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

Other Department of the Interior News

- *Colorado River basin proposals* - On November 20, the Bureau of Reclamation announced the five alternatives it will review to determine post-2026 operating guidelines for Colorado River water allocation. Analysis is expected to be published in December. Source: [Colorado Politics](#)
- *DOI attends COP29* - The week of November 17, Department of the Interior Acting Deputy Secretary Laura Daniel-Davis participated in the 29th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. She sat on several panels and delivered remarks on behalf of the United States, highlighting Tribal co-stewardship, the use of Indigenous knowledge, utilizing nature-based solutions to address climate impacts, drought resilience work, and science-backed decision making. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *DOI in Columbia* - The week of November 17, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs Carmen G. Cantor visited Columbia, sharing priorities to uplift Indigenous communities through conservation efforts and to combat illegal wildlife trafficking. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$125 million for water recycling* - On November 18, the Department of the Interior announced the award of \$125 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for five projects in California and Utah focused on large-scale water recycling. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

Congressional Actions

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

For the past seven-plus years the information provided in this report on Congressional activity of interest to the National Park Service was primarily compiled by Don Hellmann. Don retired from the National Park Service in early 2017 as the Assistant Director of the NPS for Legislative and Congressional Affairs. He began his career with the National Park Service in 1994 as the Chief of Legislative and Congressional Affairs. His years of service in the NPS had a tremendous impact on how the National Park System has grown and developed over the past quarter century. The consummate professional, he believed passionately in the work of the National Park Service, the importance and value of our nation's National Park System, and the importance of the rule of law, a founding principle of the United States of America.

On November 6, the Coalition and the National Parks Conservation Association, in conjunction with Don's family, held a memorial gathering in Don's honor. It was a time of reflection, reconnection with old friends and colleagues, and a joyous and honorable tribute to Don, a man who made a difference for the betterment of the National Park System, the National Park Service, the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks, and to his friends and family who he interacted with every day. His legacy is far reaching and his shoes will be hard to fill, but those of us who worked with him will do our best to provide the same level of service and commitment that Don did as we carry on the work of the Coalition.

-Chris Soller, Coalition Executive Committee Member

New Public Laws

P. L. 118-83, Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025. The Act provides continuing Fiscal Year 2025 appropriations for federal agencies, provides additional funding for the U.S. Secret Service, and extends various expiring programs and authorities. Signed into law on September 26, 2024.

- **DIVISION A** - Continuing Appropriations Act, 2025: This division provides continuing FY25 appropriations to federal agencies through the earlier of December 20, 2024, or the enactment of the applicable appropriations act.
 - **(Sec. 140)** This section extends the availability of certain funds that were provided to the National Park Service's Historic Preservation Fund account by the Further Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Requirements Act, 2018 for expenses related to hurricanes. Specifically, the section makes the funds available for the liquidation of valid obligations incurred in FY18 and FY19.
 - **(Sec. 104)** This section extends the authority for the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park Commission through December 20, 2024.

P.L. 118-94, Lake Tahoe Restoration Act to reauthorize the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act through September 30, 2034. Signed into law on October 1, 2024

Senate Actions

November 19: The Senate passed H.R. 5490, the BEACH Act, to amend the Coastal Barrier Resources Act to expand the John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System.

November 19: The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources ordered favorably reported the numerous business items including the following of interest to the NPS:

- S. 1764, to improve federal activities relating to wildfires, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 2620, to establish the Chesapeake National Recreation Area as a unit of the National Park System, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 2742, to establish the Fort Ontario National Monument in the State of New York as a unit of the National Park System, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 2743, to amend the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act to designate as a component of the National Heritage Area System the Finger Lakes National Heritage Area in the State of New York;
- S. 2784, to amend the Dayton Aviation Heritage Preservation Act of 1992 to adjust the boundary of the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park, with an amendment;
- S. 3123, to provide for the standardization, consolidation, and publication of data relating to public outdoor recreational use of federal waterways among federal land and water management agencies, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 3195, to designate the General George C. Marshall House, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, as an affiliated area of the National Park System, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 3241, to establish the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians and Jefferson College as affiliated areas of the Natchez National Historical Park, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 3346, to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate certain streams in the greater Yellowstone ecosystem and Smith River system in the state of Montana as components of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 3474, to re-designate the Hulls Cove Visitor Center at Acadia National Park as the “George J. Mitchell, Jr., Visitor Center,” with amendments;
- S. 3534, to authorize the Pines Foundation to establish the Fire Island AIDS Memorial, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 3542, to amend the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Act to modify the boundary of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area;
- S. 3543, to establish the Historic Greenwood District-Black Wall Street National Monument in the state of Oklahoma, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 3544, to designate the visitor and education center at Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine as the “Paul S. Sarbanes Visitor and Education Center;”
- S. 4129, to contribute funds and artifacts to the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora, North Dakota, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 4164, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of

- the Cahokia Mounds and surrounding land in the states of Illinois and Missouri, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 4209, to provide greater regional access to the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument in the state of Maine;
- S. 4216, to establish the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve in the state of Georgia, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 4218, to designate the visitor center for the First State National Historical Park to be located at the Sheriff's House in New Castle, Delaware, as the "Thomas R. Carper Visitor Center;"
- S. 4222, to adjust the boundary of the Mojave National Preserve in the state of California to include the land within the Castle Mountains National Monument, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 4227, to amend the California Desert Protection Act of 1994 to expand the boundary of Joshua Tree National Park, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 4228, to re-designate the Cottonwood Visitor Center at Joshua Tree National Park as the "Senator Dianne Feinstein Visitor Center," with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 4259, to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating certain land as the Lahaina National Heritage Area, with amendments;
- S. 4424, to direct the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to encourage and expand the use of prescribed fire on land managed by the Department of the Interior or the Forest Service, with an emphasis on units of the National Forest System in the western United States, to acknowledge and support the longstanding use of cultural burning by Tribes and Indigenous practitioners, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 4451, to require the Secretary of the Interior to enter into an agreement with the National Academy of Sciences to carry out a study on reservation systems for federal land, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 4576, to amend the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2015, to reauthorize the Colorado River System conservation pilot program;
- S. 4607, to designate the America's National Churchill Museum National Historic Landmark;
- S. 4851, to adjust the boundaries of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area to include the Scarper Ridge property;
- S. 4936, to require a study relating to the Minidoka National Historic Site;
- S. 4974, to amend the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act to reauthorize the National Volcano Early Warning and Monitoring System;
- S. 4994, to modify the boundary of the Vicksburg National Military Park in the state of Mississippi;
- S. 5125, to provide for certain improvements to the housing and workforce programs of federal land management agencies, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- S. 5136, to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of Plum Island;
- H.R. 359, to establish Fort San Gerónimo del Boquerón in Puerto Rico as an affiliated area

- of the National Park System, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;
- H.R. 3448, to amend chapter 3081 of title 54, United States Code, to enhance the protection and preservation of America's battlefields;
- H.R. 4984, to amend the District of Columbia Stadium Act of 1957 to provide for the transfer of administrative jurisdiction over the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus to the Administrator of General Services and the leasing of the Campus to the District of Columbia for purposes which include commercial and residential development; and
- H.R. 5443, to establish a policy regarding appraisal and valuation services for real property for a transaction over which the Secretary of the Interior has jurisdiction.

November 21: The Senate filed reports on the following bills of interest to the NPS:

- H.R. 359, H.R. 3448, H.R. 4984, H.R. 5443, S. 1764, S. 2620, S. 2742, S. 2784, S. 3123, S. 3195, S. 3241, S. 3346, S. 3474, S. 3534, S. 3542, S. 3543, S. 3544, S. 4129, S. 4164, S. 4209, S. 4216, S. 4218, S. 4222, S. 4227, S. 4228, S. 4259, S. 4424, S. 4451, S. 4607, S. 4851, S. 4936, S. 4974, S. 4994, S. 5125, S. 5136 (see above)
- S. 2160, to amend the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 to authorize certain extraordinary operation and maintenance work for urban canals of concern, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;

November 21: The Senate passed H.R. 2950, the Coastal Habitat Conservation Act, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior, through the Coastal Program of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, to work with willing partners and provide support to efforts to assess, protect, restore, and enhance important coastal landscapes that provide fish and wildlife habitat on which certain Federal trust species depend.

House Actions

November 14: The full House reported H.R. 6843, an act to expand the boundaries of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area to include Lafourche Parish, Louisiana.

November 18: The full house reported H.R. 1380, an act to require the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to issue guidance on climbing management in designated wilderness areas, and for other purposes, with an amendment.

November 19: The House Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing on several bills including the following bills of interest to the NPS:

- H.R. 8182, the "Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve Establishment Act;"
- H.R. 9165, the "Public Land Search and Rescue Act;"
- H.R. 9528, to re-designate certain facilities at Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park in honor of Congressman Bill Pascrell, Jr.; and
- H.R. 10084, the "Renewing the African American Civil Rights Network Act."

Testimony was heard from Tracy Glover, Sheriff, Kane County, Utah; Steve Lohr, Director of Natural Resources, National Forest System, U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture; and public witnesses.

November 20: The House Committee on Natural Resources held a markup on a number of bills including the following bills of interest to the NPS:

- H.R. 6994, the “ROUTES Act;”
- H.R. 390, the “Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Enhancement Act;”
- H.R. 4338, the “Route 66 National Historic Trail Designation Act;”
- H.R. 1584, the “Plum Island National Monument Act;”
- H.R. 6127, the “MAP Waters Act;”
- H.R. 6210, to designate the General George C. Marshall House, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, as an affiliated area of the National Park System, and for other purposes;
- H.R. 8012, the “Jackie Robinson Commemorative Site Act;” H.R. 9516, the “Military Families National Parks Access Enhancement Act;” and
- H.R. 8931, to re-designate Saratoga National Historical Park as Saratoga National Battlefield Park.

H.R. 6994, H.R. 390, H.R. 4338, H.R. 1584, H.R. 6127, H.R. 6210, H.R. 8012, and H.R. 9516 were ordered reported, as amended. H.R. 8931 was reported without amendment.

Incidents

Listed alphabetically by park.

Big Bend National Park

13 rescued

On November 16, a group of 13 migrants, including several children, was abandoned by human smugglers in a remote area near San Vicente Road. They called 911 for a rescue. U.S. Border Patrol and NPS personnel responded. All were found in good condition. Source: [mrt](#)

Blue Ridge Parkway

Hiker fatality

On November 11, a 53-year-old went into cardiac arrest while hiking on the Humpback Rocks Trail (near Milepost 6). Other visitors administered CPR. Personnel from the NPS and other “local first responders” also arrived on scene and attempted resuscitation but were unsuccessful.

Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)

Blue Ridge Parkway

Hiker fatality

On November 24, two people were hiking on the Price Lake Trail when one, 70-years-old experienced a “medical emergency.” Their companion left them on the trail to seek assistance. Personnel from the NPS and the Blowing Rock (NC) Fire Department responded to the scene, where they met up with the companion. The individual was found off the trail and deceased.

Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)

Cape Cod National Seashore

Rabies

On November 17, a dead raccoon was found in Eastham, MA, and sent for testing. On November 20, the report came back positive for rabies. Source: [WBZ News Radio](#)

Cape Hatteras National Seashore

House collapse

The night of November 14, an unoccupied house on Surf Side Drive in Rodanthe, North Carolina, collapsed. The beach in front of Rodanthe was closed due to hazardous debris. Debris removal was delayed due to “severe weather conditions.” It is the sixth house collapse since May of this year. Source: [Cape Hatteras National Seashore](#)

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area

Animal-involved accidents

On November 6, the park announced on social media that it has experienced “a troubling rise in motor vehicle collisions with wildlife, particularly on Route 209.” Between October and early November, over 20 animals were hit by vehicles, including deer, coyotes, and bears. The park cited “excessive speed” as the primary factor and stated that it plans to increase patrols targeting speeding. Source: [Pocono Record](#)

Fort Pulaski National Monument

Tidal flooding

Due to projected tidal flooding, Fort Pulaski delayed opening November 16-17 and closed all hiking trails for the weekend. Source: [Fort Pulaski National Monument](#)

Grand Canyon National Park

Pipeline break

On November 26, a section of the Transcanyon Pipeline on the North Kaibab Trail broke, impacting the park’s water supply. Mandatory water conservation measures were enacted on the South Rim immediately. As of November 26, there was no water available at the Manzanita Rest Area. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve

Hunter fatality

On October 30, an individual separated from their party while hunting on the north side of the park in Saguache County, Colorado. When the individual failed to show up at their camp the following morning, their party used a satellite communication device to request rescue help, and the individual's sibling began to search for them on foot. The sibling located the individual's body later that afternoon. On November 1, the individual's body was recovered with support from personnel from the NPS, the state, local search and rescue, and REACH Air Medical Services.

Source: [The Denver Post](#)

Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area

Landslide

On November 17, a landslide occurred in the Columbia River near Kettle Falls, across from Colville Flats. Water from a displacement wave washed over Highway 25, reaching the base of the hill just south of Colville Flats. The NPS reported no damage to park facilities. As of November 19, the landslide was still experiencing movement, with debris continuing to wash downstream. Source: [KHQ](#)

Natchez Trace Parkway

Murder conviction

On November 14, a 29-year-old pleaded guilty to a homicide on the Natchez Trace Parkway on September 23, 2018. The individual got into a fight with their housemate during a party they were hosting. The victim left the house, and the individual followed them and convinced them to go for a drive together. They drove to the parkway, where the culprit shot the victim multiple times. The victim was found the following morning by a pedestrian walking along the trail on the parkway. The culprit will be sentenced on February 12, 2025. The investigation was completed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Park Service and Ridgeland (MS) Police. Source: [WJTV](#), [U.S. Attorney's Office: Southern District of Mississippi](#)

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

Impending lawsuit from concession

The owners of Manitou Island Transit have stated they plan to sue the park for a breach of their concession contract because of a plan to relocate the docks on both North and South Manitou Islands. The dock project could close their ferry service for up to two years on each island. The dock relocation is a \$27 million project being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act in an effort to reduce dredging needs. Manitou Island Transit won a similar lawsuit against the park in 2021 when the South Manitou dock disconnected from its pilings and the North Manitou dock was inundated with sand. Source: [Interlochen Public Radio](#)

Yellowstone National Park

Wolves killed outside park

On November 1, a wolf was found dead in heavy cover inside Montana's Wolf Management Unit

313, located adjacent to Yellowstone. It was the fifth wolf killed in the unit despite a quota goal of three wolves in place this season. All five were likely killed on October 25. Based on an investigation by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, it is believed that the fifth wolf was unknowingly wounded/killed. All five wolves are from the 8 Mile Pack, raising concerns from ecologists and local businesses that rely on wildlife viewing tourism. Source: [KTVQ](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site* - On November 14, the park gave an update on recovery efforts since Hurricane Helene. Saw crews have cut 50 downed and hazard trees from Carl Sandburg Lane and park trails. They were removed the week of November 18. Two pedestrian bridges along Front Lake trail, as well as the banks the bridges sat on, have washed out. The park is working on placing temporary bridges or re-routing the trail. Front Lake dam and bridge sustained “substantial” damage and “repairs will take a long time.” The park’s main sewer pipe is also broken. After the debris is removed and washouts repaired, the park will bring in portable restrooms. As of November 24, the park remained closed to the public. Source: [Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site](#)
- *Cumberland Island National Seashore* - On November 8, a federal district court dismissed a lawsuit against the National Park Service asking it to remove horses from the park for their protection and the wellbeing of the ecosystem (see [4/26/23 Coalition Report](#)). The judge acknowledged the National Park Service has not violated any laws or policies, and therefore does not have a legal duty to remove feral horses. However, the judge also sympathized with the plight of the horses and the island’s endangered species, expressing hope that the NPS would act, regardless. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *George Washington Memorial Parkway* - On November 12, the Office of Inspector General released a report that concluded that the two U.S. Park Police officers who shot unarmed motorist Bijan Ghaisar in 2017 acted reasonably and within policy. The two officers have been on paid leave since they were charged with manslaughter in Fairfax County (VA) in 2020, and before that, they were on paid administrative duty since the November 2017 shooting. A federal judge dismissed the criminal case in 2021. The Department of the Interior issued letters to the two officers shortly after the 2021 dismissal stating the Interior Department “was seeking to fire them.” After three years of no action, the two officers sued the DOI in July 2024 (see [8/7/24 Coalition Report](#)). The family of the victim has stated that they object to the report’s finding. In 2023, the federal government paid a \$5 million settlement to the motorist’s family to resolve the civil suit against the U.S. Park Police. Source: [The Washington Post](#)
- *Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area* - The Avista Corp. utility company agreed to pay \$900,000 for natural resource and archaeological damage sustained while moving a power pole in 2017 (see [10/30/24 Coalition Report](#)). Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)

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- Editor: Katie Wallace
- Tech and Production Support: Steve Pittleman, Emily Thompson
- Regular Correspondent: Chris Soller

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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