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The Coalition Report

Wednesday, October 2, 2024

Coalition Actions

The Coalition [submitted comments](#) to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation asking it to carefully consider the historic resources associated with Minidoka in its final comments to the Bureau of Land Management regarding the Lava Ridge Wind Project. It argues that the BLM has not properly identified historic resources related to the camp as a potential historic property as required under Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act, among other issues.

We also joined 44 other organizations in signing [a letter](#) to Vice President Kamala Harris asking for a reversal of the Lava Ridge Wind Project due to its deficiencies in the planning and compliance phases.

The Coalition [submitted comments](#) on the Visitor Access Management Draft Plan for Yosemite National Park, including many suggestions for incorporating resource impact metrics when determining carrying capacities for reservations.

We [submitted comments](#) on the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed response to Utah's Regional Haze State Implementation Plan for the second implementation period, commending the EPA for its partial disapproval and supporting the requirement to do more to control pollution.

The Coalition joined 12 other conservation organizations in [submitting comments](#) in strong opposition to the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed approval of the regional haze State Implementation Plan revision submitted by the North Carolina

Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Air Quality. It includes concerns that the plan relies on flawed modeling using decade-old data and omits four of the five biggest haze polluters in its analysis.

Coalition Chair Phil Francis [spoke with Inside Philanthropy](#) about the Lilly Endowment's \$100 million gift to the National Park Foundation and how it is an indicator of the large budgetary shortfall facing the National Park Service.

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.

- *Tracking FLREA projects* - *National Parks Traveler* published a spreadsheet of 7,300 projects funded by Federal Land Recreation Enhancement Act fees from FY2020-2022. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Lighting research* - New research by the The Pennsylvania State University Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management found that visitors feel comfortable about their safety at "levels significantly lower than current outdoor lighting practices," indicating a possible balance for managing dark skies with visitor safety needs. The NPS' Natural Sounds and Night Skies Division is referenced in the article. Source: [PennState](#)
- *NPCA urges Congress to fund NPS* - On September 19, the National Parks Conservation Association published [an op-ed](#) arguing for Congress to "adequately fund our national parks" by extending the Great American Outdoors Act at least five more years and increasing operations funding for the NPS. Source: National Parks Conservation Association

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *American Battlefield Protection Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On September 19, the NPS awarded \$9.5 million in Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants and Battlefield Interpretation Grants. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *American World War II Heritage Cities* (an NPS-administered program) - On September 17, the NPS designated eight communities as American World War II Heritage Cities. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park* - On October 18, the park opened a new exhibit at the Old Slater Mill National Historic Landmark called "Laboring for

Freedom: African Americans in the Blackstone River Valley." The exhibit was created in collaboration with Stages of Freedom. It highlights the contributions of Black laborers in the region from early industry through the Civil War. The exhibit will be on display through Winter 2024. Source: [Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park](#)

- *Blackwell School National Historic Site* - *USA Today* published [an article](#) chronicling the history and significance of Blackwell School, including interviews with alumni from the school. Source: *USA Today*
- *Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park* - This month, the park will begin a project to repair the Four Locks boat ramp and parking lot (mile 108.9). The boat ramp and parking lot will remain closed during the project. It is expected to be complete after the winter. Source: [Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park](#)
- *Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area* - On September 20, the park reopened the Old Mine Road between Worthington State Forest and Millbrook Village (NJ), Van Campens Glen, and Poxono Access after a major upgrade. The project is the first phase of a two-phase \$11 million project funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. The second phase will focus on the northern end of the park, in Sandyston and Montague Townships. Source: [Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area](#)
- *Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area* - On October 2, George W. Childs Park reopened to the public for the first time since 2018, "when back-to-back winter storms destroyed much of the site." The restoration includes the removal of downed trees, resurfacing of 2,000 feet of accessible trail, repair and replacement of six bridges, replacement of railings and fencing, new retaining walls, new benches and signs, and repairs to three observation platforms. Source: [Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area](#)
- *Fort Washington Park* - On September 30, the park closed its visitor center to begin a project to make upgrades to the building and install new exhibits. It is expected to be closed through November 9. Source: [Fort Washington Park](#)
- *George Washington Memorial Parkway* - The parkway will soon begin a project to rehabilitate 15 historic views between North Donaldson Overlook and Spout Run Parkway. Temporary northbound lane closures may be in effect "on select weekends." The project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [George Washington Memorial Parkway](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - New research published in *Geodiversitas* documents the discovery of the earliest fossil ever found in Glacier. It was found by scientists from the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in 2022. When the fossil was found, park

scientists combed their records and found two other fossils from the same era in history that were previously unpublished, thereby extending the fossil record of the park and supporting future research on mammal evolution in the region. The fossils were identified as *Pronodens transmonatnus*, a small deer-like animal, *Pacichnus montanus*, a prehistoric rodent, and *Miohippus*, a prehistoric horse. They were found in the Kishenehn Basin, and are dated to the Oligocene (33.9-22.03 million years ago). Source: [National Park Service Park Paleontology Newsletter, Fall 2024](#)

- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area* - On September 26, the park announced that it has permanently closed Dangling Rope Marina. The location was the only option for fuel on the 100-mile stretch between the other two fuel stations at Wahweap/Antelope Point and Bullfrog/Halls Crossing. In 2017, the location was slated for a \$3 million upgrade to its electrical system that would have allowed for power during varied water levels. However, cost increases pushed the budget to \$5 million, which delayed the project further. Then the sewage lift station separated from the dock and sunk. In 2021, a major storm caused extensive damage to the marina, breaking apart and damaging the dock. Prolonged drought on the lake eventually thwarted the electrical project, as well as drinking water wells, and eventually, access was cut off entirely. It will now be removed entirely to make way for a new mid-lake fuel station that is operational at low water. Design is underway by a private marine engineering firm. There is no estimated construction date. Source: [KSL](#)
- *Grand Teton National Park* - *The Washington Post* published [an article](#) about the park's Wildlife Brigade volunteer group, which is tasked with managing visitor-wildlife interactions for the safety of both. Source: [The Washington Post](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - On September 18, the U.S. Board of Geographic Names changed the name of Clingmans Dome to Kuwohi (ᏊᏊᏏ), the Cherokee name for the mountain, meaning "mulberry place." The change was submitted in January by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The park is working to update signage and publications to reflect the change. Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)
- *Isle Royale National Park* - On September 23, the park announced that the Commercial Use Authorization application period will be open from November 1-30, 2024, for operating guided land-based tours, including backcountry trips, day hikes, and educational/photography workshops. Issued CUAs will last for two years. Source: [Isle Royale National Park](#)
- *Lake Clark National Park and Preserve* - On October 15, the Stephen F. Austin State University Wind Ensemble will present the first of three concerts from the "Composing in the Wilderness" project that took place in Lake Clark during Summer 2023. The project was supported by the Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival,

Alaska Geographic, and the NPS. The other two concerts will be performed by the University of Nebraska - Lincoln Wind Ensemble and the Grand Valley State University Wind Symphony. Source: [Stephen F. Austin State University News and Media Center](#)

- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - On September 26, the park announced the issue of a prospectus for the Willow Beach Black Canyon concession contract, including guided raft trips, canoe and kayak rental, security escort to Hoover Dam, a 90-slip marina, cafe, retail store, campsites, fishing dock, fuel, pump-out stations, and boat towing services. Proposals are due January 28. Source: [Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)
- *Longfellow House Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site* - On September 26, the park announced the completion of several museum collection conservation projects in the Longfellow House study, including the inkstand, writing case, window seat cushions, window treatments, and window cornices. The project was funded by the Friends of Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters. Source: [Longfellow House Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site](#)
- *Morristown National Historical Park* - The park has begun a historic preservation project on the exterior of the Wick House Barn. The project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act and executed by the NPS' Maintenance Action Team. Source: [Morristown National Historical Park](#)
- *Morristown National Historical Park* - On October 5, the park will reopen Fort Mansion after a 10-month restoration of its historic windows, repointing of the foundation, exterior paint, protective window filters, new period-appropriate draperies, and the installation of interpretive elements. Source: [Morristown National Historical Park](#)
- *Mount Rushmore National Memorial* - The *South Dakota Searchlight* published [an essay](#) about efforts by the Sioux Nation of Indians to have federal lands in the Black Hills, including Mount Rushmore, returned to the Tribe. Source: *South Dakota Searchlight*
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - *WTOP* published [an article](#) about proposed plans by the NPS to install 12 new public restrooms and replace three existing restrooms on the National Mall. There are currently no public restrooms between the Washington Monument and the U.S. Capitol. Previously, visitors would have stopped into one of the Smithsonian Institution museums to use the restrooms, but increased security and timed ticketing have made this difficult, and visitors have begun using nearby vegetation to relieve themselves. The plan will be reviewed by the National Capital Planning Commission on October 3. If approved, construction on the first phase could start as early as 2026. Source: *WTOP*

- *New River Gorge National Park and Preserve* - On November 1, the Federal Highway Administration will begin a project to improve the Cunard Road (Route 9) in the park. The project is expected to last through March 31, 2025. A closure will be in place throughout the project, from the parking lot for the Brooklyn Mine Trail, extending to the river access at Cunard, over to Angler's Access and Brooklyn Campground. The Brooklyn Mine Trail and Kaymoor Trail will remain closed. Source: [New River Gorge National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On September 25, the NPS announced \$254.68 million for 54 projects in 24 states for the redevelopment or creation of new local parks. It is the largest grant investment by the program in its history. The grants are funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial* - In July, the park completed a project to rehabilitate and rebuild the seawall that protects the memorial. The project was funded by the NPS' Line-Item Construction program. The project also replaced sidewalks and improved the stormwater system. Source: [Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial](#)
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - On September 12, the California Coastal Commission approved an NPS proposal to remove a fence confining a herd of tule elk at Tomales Point. The NPS has not finalized the plan and there is no date set for fence removal due to two related lawsuits that are working their ways through the courts. Source: [Marin Independent Journal](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - The *Estes Park News* published [an article](#) about the accomplishments of the 2024 Rocky Mountain Conservancy-Conservation Corps, including the treatment of 143 acres of invasive plants, replanting of 125 species, and the maintenance of elk exclosures in the Kawuneeche Valley to aid wetland recovery. Source: *Estes Park News*
- *Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore* - *Interlochen Public Radio* published [an article](#) about growing opposition to the park's plan to extend the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail, a paved multi-use trail, by 4.5 miles through the park. The plan, known as Segment 9, has been in the works since 2009. The opposition now includes the National Parks Conservation Association, Cleveland Township, and the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians. The opposition has cited concerns about the environmental impacts and treaty gathering rights. Source: *Interlochen Public Radio*
- *Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore* - Kerry Kelly, the chair of the board of directors for Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes, recently received the 2024 Jim Mudgett Trail Pioneer Award from Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation

Trails, Inc. (TART Trails) for his efforts supporting trail projects in the park. Source: [9and10news](#)

- *Theodore Roosevelt National Park* - [A video](#) posted to the park's social media accounts of a ranger dancing and rotating through many NPS uniform variations went viral and attracted mentions in many national news outlets. Source: [The New York Times](#) (and many others)
- *Voyageurs National Park* - On September 16, the park and the Voyageurs Conservancy announced the acquisition of a 51-acre property on Big Island on Rainy Lake. It is only accessible by water, located 18 miles east of the Rainy Lake Visitor Center. Funding for the parcel came from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Source: [Voyageurs National Park](#)

Personnel Changes

- *Death Valley National Park* - Philip Johnson was selected as the new chief ranger. Philip has 22 years of NPS experience, most recently as chief ranger at Devils Postpile National Monument. He is a two-time recipient of the Department of the Interior Valor Award. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)
- *Great Sand Dunes National Park* - Zachary Parkes was selected as the new chief of visitor and resource protection "earlier this year." Zachary has 15 years of NPS experience, most recently as the law enforcement supervisor for field staff at Great Sand Dunes. Source: [Great Sand Dunes National Park](#)
- *Yosemite Conservancy* - Cassius Cash was selected to become the new president and CEO of the Yosemite Conservancy. Cash has 20 years of U.S. Forest Service experience and 14 years of NPS experience, currently as the superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. He will begin his new role in January 2025. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)

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

- George Edward Herron, 84, passed away on August 28. He worked for the NPS for 31 years, including at Natchez Trace Parkway, retiring in 1999. He received the Harry Yount Award in 1995 from the NPS Southeast Region. Source: [Legacy/The Daily Times](#)
- John Robert "Bob" Hewat, 100, passed away on August 11. Bob worked for over

50 years as a "seasonal park ranger and naturalist" at Blue Ridge Parkway. Source: [Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center](#), Kevin FitzGerald

- Virginia "Ginnie" Irvine, 74, passed away on September 11. Ginnie spent several summers working at Yellowstone National Park. Source: [Seven Days](#)
- Nina Quinn Johnson, 88, passed away on September 22. Nina worked as a seasonal ranger at Big Hole National Battlefield for ten years "after retirement." Source: [Legacy/Clark Funeral Home - Granby](#)
- Harry C. McMillin, 80, passed away on September 22. Harry worked as a licensed park guide in Vicksburg National Military Park for 18 years, and later founded and served as the first executive director for the Friends of Vicksburg National Park. Source: [The Vicksburg Post](#)
- John Michael "Mike" Moseley, Sr. passed away on September 20. Mike worked for a time as a carpenter with the National Park Service. Source: [Island Free Press](#)
- Andrew Watt (Orbie) Mungall, 73, passed away on September 20. He worked at Yellowstone National Park during the summers while he was in college. Source: [Standard-Examiner](#)
- Walter Frederick "Fred" Nemacheck, 84, passed away on September 8. Fred volunteered for Rocky Mountain National Park at Bear Lake for 14 years in his retirement. Source: [Estes Park News](#)
- Ella Lee Ross, 81, passed away on September 24. Ella had a 30+ year career as an archivist in Jackson Library at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. In her retirement, she performed volunteer archivist work for the NPS "in Deer Lodge, Montana, at Redwood National [and State] Parks, and Shenandoah National Park." [Editor note: The obituary did not specify, but it is likely the Deer Lodge, Montana, site is referring to Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site.] Source: [rrspin.com/Askew Funeral Service](#)
- Theodore "Ted" H. Schaefer, Jr., 91, passed away on September 25. Ted worked for the NPS in the National Capital Region for a time, starting in 1959. Source: [York Dispatch](#)

Retired

- On September 30, Craig Ackerman retired as the long-time superintendent at Crater Lake National Park. The *Herald and News* published [an article](#) about his career. Source: *Herald and News*

In the News

- James "Jim" Sherald, who passed away in 2023, was featured in an article by *Casey Trees* for his work reintroducing disease-resistant American Elms on the National Mall to the area around Washington, DC. Jim was the former chief of natural resources and sciences in the National Capital Region and the plant pathologist for the Center for Urban Ecology (now under the Natural Resources and Science [NRS] team). He also served on the board for Casey Trees for a time. Source: [Casey Trees](#), David Manski

Open for Comment

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

- *Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Curecanti National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through October 2](#) on a fire management plan for the two parks. Source: [Curecanti National Recreation Area](#)
- *Cumberland Island National Seashore* - Public comment is [open through October 6](#) on proposed land exchanges with private landowners for parcels located inside the boundary of the park. Source: [Cumberland Island National Seashore](#)
- *Freedom Riders National Monument* - Public comment is [open through October 9](#) on preliminary master plan concepts for the Bus Burning Site. Source: [Freedom Riders National Monument](#)
- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through November 15](#) on a proposal to change regulations about Off Road Vehicle use on shoreline access areas and unpaved roads in the Orange Cliffs Special Management Unit. Source: [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#)
- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through October 14](#) on a proposal to channelize the River Mile-12 slough below Glen Canyon Dam to reduce water temperature and increase water velocity to help control smallmouth bass and other non-native warm water fish. Source: [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - Public comment is [open through October 12](#) on an increase in backcountry permit fees. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has opened public comment through October 21 on a revised recovery plan for the endangered sentry milk-vetch, which lives only in the Grand Canyon. Comments may be made by email to shaula_hedwall@fws.gov or by mail. Source: [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)
- *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - The NPS, in coordination with Hawaiian Electric, has [opened public comment through October 23](#) on a proposed electrical line relocation project between Pi'i Mauna Drive and the park boundary near Old

Volcano Road. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)

- *Kenai Fjords National Park* - Public comment is [open through October 22](#) on a frontcountry management plan, including visitor use at the Exit Glacier. Source: [Kenai Fjords National Park](#)
- *Mammoth Cave National Park* - Public comment is [open through October 27](#) on a proposal to increase cave tour rates for youth under the age of six-years-old. The new ticket prices would begin non March 1, 2025. Source: [Mammoth Cave National Park](#)
- *National Heritage Areas* (an NPS-administered program) - Public comment is [open through November 25](#) on a feasibility study for the designation of Ka'ena Point as a National Heritage Area. Source: [Maui News](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - Public comment is [open through October 30](#) on a design concept for the proposed Fallen Journalists Memorial. Source: [National Mall and Memorial Parks](#)
- *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - Public comment is [open through November 3](#) on a fire management plan. Source: [Valles Caldera National Preserve](#)
- *Virgin Islands National Park* - Public comment is [open through October 9](#) on proposed changes to amenity fees. Source: [Virgin Islands National Park](#)
- *White Sands National Park* - Public comment is [open through October 24](#) on a proposed increase in fees for moonlight hikes, Lake Lucero tours, and astronomy programs. Source: [White Sands National Park](#)

Other Department of the Interior News

- *Pilot program to convert vehicles to fire engines* - On September 19, the Department of the Interior launched the Slip-on Tanker Pilot Program, which is aimed at expanding wildfire capacity by converting vehicles to wildland fire engines. The first round of funding, \$1.3 million, was awarded to 21 emergency response agencies in 10 states, representing communities with moderate to high wildfire risk. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *5 new Colorado River agreements* - On September 25, the Department of the Interior announced the finalization of five water conservation agreements related to the Colorado River. Short-term agreements were established with the Imperial Irrigation District (CA), Bard Water District (CA) and Metropolitan Water District (CA), as well as two long-term agreements with the Gila River Indian Community (AZ). These agreements will exchange Inflation Reduction Act funding for water conservation efforts. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

- *Sustainable forest commerce report* - On September 27, the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture, and Commerce released a new report, "Recommendations for Regional Economic Development Through Sustainable Forest Products and Outdoor Recreation." The report provides recommendations to encourage greater collaboration among federal agencies to build "resilient, healthy forests" while supporting rural economic development. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Garter snake lawsuit* - On July 11, the Center for Biological Diversity and the Maricopa Audubon Society sued the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, arguing that its mismanagement of livestock grazing on the Big Sandy River in Arizona is pushing the northern Mexican garter snake, a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act, toward extinction. On September 20, the federal government denied the allegations in its filing in U.S. district court. Source: [Cronkite News](#)
- *\$92 million for aquatic ecosystems* - On September 24, the Department of the Interior announced the award of \$92 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding and annual appropriations for the Bureau of Reclamation for 19 projects related to restoring and protecting aquatic ecosystems. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$24 million for ecosystem restoration* - On September 23, the Department of the Interior announced the award of \$24 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for 50 ecosystem restoration projects in 34 states and several U.S. territories. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$17 million for orphaned wells on Tribal lands* - On September 19, the Department of the Interior announced the award of \$16.7 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for five Tribal Nations to address orphaned oil and gas wells. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

Congressional Actions

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

Senate Actions

September 24 - The Senate reported on two measures: S. 1634, to provide for the designation of certain wilderness areas, recreation management areas, and conservation areas in the state of Colorado, with amendments (S. Rept. No. 118–231); and S. 1776, to provide for the protection of and investment in certain federal land in the state of California, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute (S. Rept. No. 118–232).

September 25 - The Senate passed H.R. 9747, Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, funding most federal agencies at their Fiscal Year 2024 levels through December 20, 2024.

House Actions

September 18 - The Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing on:

- H.R. 1479, the "Chiricahua National Park Act;"
- H.R. 1504, the "Apex Area Technical Corrections Act;"
- H.R. 8931, to re-designate Saratoga National Historical Park as Saratoga National Battlefield Park;
- H.R. 8946, the "Reversionary Interest Conveyance Act;"
- H.R. 9159, the "Appalachian Trail Centennial Act;"
- H.R. 9492, to amend Public Law 99-338 with respect to Kaweah Project permits;
- HR. 9516, the "Military Families National Parks Access Enhancement Act;" and
- S. 612, the "Lake Tahoe Restoration Reauthorization Act."

Testimony was heard from Representatives Ciscomani, Horsford, Valadao, and Chavez-DeRemer; Jacqueline Emanuel, Associate Deputy Chief, National Forest System, U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture; Mike Caldwell, Associate Director, Park Planning, Facilities, and Lands, National Park Service, Department of the Interior; Pamela Goynes-Brown, Mayor, North Las Vegas, Nevada; and public witnesses.

September 19 - The Committee on Natural Resources held a markup on a number of bills including the following that had relevance to the NPS:

- H.R. 3283, the "Facilitating DIGITAL Applications Act;"
- H.R. 4235, the "Wildfire Technology DEMO Act;"
- H.R. 6826, to designate the visitor and education center at Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine as the Paul S. Sarbanes Visitor and Education Center;
- H.R. 6843, to expand the boundaries of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area to include Lafourche Parish, Louisiana;
- H.R. 8219, the "Lahaina National Heritage Area Act;"
- H.R. 8811, the "America's Conservation Enhancement Reauthorization Act of 2024;"
- H.R. 9533, the "ESA Amendments Act of 2024;" and
- S. 612, the "Lake Tahoe Restoration Reauthorization Ac."

H.R. 3283, H.R. 4235, H.R. 8219, H.R. 8811, and H.R. 9533, were ordered reported, as amended. H.R. 6826, H.R. 6843, and S. 612 were ordered reported, without amendment.

September 25 - The House of Representatives passed the Continuing Appropriations and

Extensions Act, 2025: H.R. 9747, making continuing appropriations and extensions for Fiscal Year 2025, funding most federal agencies at their FY24 levels through December 20, 2024.

Incidents

Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.

Many Parks (see below)

Hurricane Helene

Many parks were affected by Hurricane Helene, up and down the Eastern seaboard. The following updates are as of Tuesday, October 1. For the latest update, please see each park's website.

- Closed temporarily, but now re-opened after clean-up: [Big Cypress National Preserve](#), [Biscayne National Park](#), [Castillo de San Marcos National Monument](#), [Charles Pinckney National Historic Site](#), [Everglades National Park](#), [Fort Pulaski National Monument](#), [Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie National Historical Park](#), [Gulf Islands National Seashore](#), [Horseshoe Bend National Military Park](#), [Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park](#)
- Still closed:
 - [Andrew Johnson National Historic Site](#): The whole park is closed for stabilization and cleanup efforts, and there is no water available in town.
 - [Appalachian National Scenic Trail](#): Substantial sections are closed in Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and southwest Virginia
 - [Blue Ridge Parkway](#): The full length of the parkway in North Carolina is closed due to damage. One park report called it "catastrophic damage."
 - [Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site](#): The whole park remains closed for assessment.
 - [Congaree National Park](#): The park lost both power and water during the hurricane, and the whole park remains closed until services can be restored.
 - [Cowpens National Battlefield](#): The whole park remains closed for assessment.
 - [Cumberland Island National Seashore](#): The Pinnacle Road, Lewis Hollow Picnic Area, Bartlett Park Restrooms remain closed due to impacts from the hurricane.
 - [De Soto National Memorial](#): The whole park remains closed for assessment. Initial reports state that "the storm destroyed the majority of the park trails and took down several trees. The visitor center had several inches of standing water and is without power. The park does not have any functioning public restrooms and water fountains." Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
 - [Dry Tortugas National Park](#): Garden Key reopened on 9/29; Loggerhead Key remains closed.
 - [Fort Frederica National Monument](#): The whole park remains closed for

assessment.

- [Fort Matanzas National Monument](#): The park is open, but ferry operations are canceled until further notice due to damage sustained in the hurricane.
- [Great Smoky Mountains](#): Many closures remain in place (see list in link).
- [Kings Mountain National Military Park](#): The whole park remains closed for assessment.
- [Ninety Six National Historic Site](#): The whole park remains closed for assessment.
- [Reconstruction Era National Historical Park](#): The Beaufort Visitor Center is without power and remains closed. Capers Creek Trail at Darrah Hall is closed due to damage. Pinckney-Porter's Chapel in Port Royal and Darrah Hall at the Penn Center are open for normal operations.
- [Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve](#): Kingsley Plantation remains closed due to storm impacts and power outages. Fort Caroline National Memorial, Ribault Column, and Theodore Roosevelt are open, as of September 29.

Acadia National Park

Hiker rescue

On September 18, a 58-year-old experienced "a serious medical event" while hiking on the Beehive Trail. The individual was halfway up the vertical section of the trail. A team of NPS and Mount Desert Island (ME) rescuers assessed the situation and requested a helicopter from the Maine Forest Service. They were able to use a short-haul rescue technique to extract the individual. They were then transferred to a Bar Harbor Fire Department ambulance and transported to Mount Desert Island Hospital. The trail was closed for about an hour during the incident. Source: [Acadia National Park](#)

Assateague Island National Seashore

Medical waste

From September 15-17, a great deal of hazardous materials, including used needles, hygiene products, smoking products, and miscellaneous plastics washed up on the shore of the park (and on beaches across the region). The park was closed to allow for clean-up. On September 20 and 21, the park reopened most of the island. Assateague Island north of the State Park "will remain closed for at least another week" due to it getting more debris than other locations. Visitors are advised to wear shoes on the beach out of an abundance of caution. The source of the material is unknown and under investigation. Source: [Assateague Island National Seashore](#)

Badlands National Park

Trail closure

On September 24, the park closed the Notch Trail and all areas within 150 feet of the trail until further notice due to "safety hazards associated with loose rocks on and around the

base of the ladder." Source: [Badlands National Park](#)

Big South Fork National River & Recreation Area

Stolen viewfinder

On September 21, a specialized viewfinder that helps colorblind individuals see vibrant fall foliage was stolen from the East Rim Overlook. They also ripped a large hole in the floor of the overlook balcony. The park has temporarily repaired the hole and will replace it later this fall. The park is looking for any information the public can provide about this incident.

Source: [Big South Fork National River & Recreation Area](#)

Blue Ridge Parkway

Vehicle fatality

On September 17, a vehicle left the roadway near milepost 101 at a high rate of speed and hit a tree, causing the tree to fall on the car. Personnel from the NPS and local emergency agencies responded. The driver, 36-years-old, passed away due to injuries sustained in the accident. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)

Bryce Canyon National Park

Hiker rescue

On September 18, a 47-year-old failed to return from a day hike in the park on the Swamp Canyon Trail. They were reported missing and NPS staff began a search that evening. The following day, NPS staff spotted the individual's "unique shoe tracks" and were able to follow them until they made contact with the hiker. The individual was exhausted and dehydrated, and was extracted by a Utah Department of Public Safety helicopter. They were then treated by Garfield County (UT) EMS. Source: [Bryce Canyon National Park Facebook page](#)

Canyonlands National Park

White-nose syndrome fungus found

On September 18, the park announced that samples from May reveal that *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*, the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome in bats, is present in the park. It is the first documented case in the state of Utah. There currently is no evidence of the disease or increased bat mortality in the park. The Utah State Division of Wildlife Resources and partnering federal agencies will continue to monitor the situation. Source: [Canyonlands National Park](#)

Cape Hatteras National Seashore

3 houses collapse

On September 20, two adjacent houses collapsed in Rodanthe, North Carolina. The first collapsed early in the morning, causing damage to the neighboring house, which

collapsed late that night. On September 24, another house collapsed in Rodanthe. The house was unoccupied. No injuries were reported in conjunction with the three collapses. There have now been ten house collapses onto Cape Hatteras beaches in the past four years. Visitors are urged to stay out of the water and exhibit caution while walking on the beach. As of September 24, the park closed the beach from G A Kohler Court in Rodanthe to Wimble Shores North Court in Waves. The property owners have hired contractors for debris cleanup, with support from NPS staff. Between September 22-26, park staff removed over 60 pickup truck loads of debris from beaches. There is no estimated timeframe for beach restoration due to the potential for additional debris to wash ashore. Source: Cape Hatteras National Seashore ([first collapse](#), [second collapse](#), [third collapse](#), [9/26 follow-up](#))

Devils Tower National Monument

Climber fatality

On September 22, a 21-year-old was rappelling off a rock climbing route known as El Cracko Diablo when they fell. Personnel from Hulett (WY) EMS Paramedic pronounced the individual deceased at the scene. The individual's climbing partner was left stranded in the incident and was rescued off the route with support from Devils Tower Lodge Climbing Guides and Buck Wild Climbing Guides. NPS staff and Crook County (WY) Sheriff's Office also supported the incident. It is only the seventh climbing fatality on Devils Tower in recorded history. Source: [Devils Tower National Monument](#)

Glacier National Park

Bear attack

On September 19, a 35-year-old was hiking with a group near the Grinnell Glacier Overlook trailhead when they sustained "non-life threatening injuries from a bear." They were reportedly bitten below the knee. Other members in their party used bear spray to deter the bear, stopped the bleeding with first-aid supplies, and contacted park dispatch via a satellite device. With the support of NPS staff and other visitors, the injured individual hiked to the Granite Park Chalet, where they boarded a Two Bear Air aircraft. They were flown to the horse corrals at Apgar, then transported by a Three Rivers ambulance to the hospital in Whitefish, Montana. The park closed the section of the Highline Trail from Haystack Butte to Granite Park Chalet. The species of bear is "under investigation," and the trail will remain closed "until further notice." Source: [Glacier National Park](#), [KING5](#)

Glacier National Park

Trout introduction lawsuit

The week of September 16, the Friends of the Wild Swan and the Council on Wildlife and Fish sued the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for their plan to stock endangered bull trout in Gunsight Lake. The groups allege that the project did not take into account a separate plan to rebuild St. Mary Diversion Dam, which will help bull

trout, that it improperly added mountain whitefish to the species introduction plan after public comment was closed, and that it will illegally "take" bull trout from donor streams. They also feel that because Gunsight Lake is not a location where bull trout lived historically, it risks endangering the population. They also believe the process was incorrectly administered because the NPS issued a Finding of No Significant Impact before the USFWS issued a permit. Source: [Daily Montanan](#)

Great Sand Dunes National Park

Response for nearby hiker fatality

On September 27, a hiker fell and hit their head on a rock at the end of the trail to Zapata Falls, located on Bureau of Land Management lands adjacent to the park. The individual was pronounced dead at the scene. NPS staff were involved in the recovery effort, as well as Alamosa County (CO) Sheriff's Office, Alamosa EMS, and Mosca Hooper Volunteer Fire Department. Source: [Valley Courier](#)

Golden Gate National Recreation Area

Coyote kills dogs

In the month of September, three off-leash dogs were killed at Crissy Field. The park is investigating the situation and has posted signs to alert dog owners. They also stated that they were working to haze coyotes. Source: [SFGate](#)

Golden Gate National Recreation Area

Boat rescue

On September 29, a boat with five passengers became inoperable off of Ocean Beach near intersection of the Great Highway and Quintara Street. They individuals were able to drop an anchor and stay stationary, but the breaking waves were quite turbulent. Personnel from San Francisco Fire Department, the NPS, and U.S. Coast Guard used jet skis to transfer the individuals to a Coast Guard boat, and they were transferred to the Coast Guard base in Marin, California. No injuries were reported in the incident. Source: [ABC7](#)

Independence National Historical Park

Crack on clock

On September 20, the park announced on its social media that they discovered a crack in the north facing clock of the Independence Hall tower, likely to an imperfection in the glass or "tight glazing clamps." The park said it plans to complete repairs this fall. Source: [Independence National Historical Park Instagram](#)

Katmai National Park and Preserve

Bear-human interactions

Between September 18 and 29, there were four documented incidents of bears obtaining fish from anglers on the Brooks River. The Brooks River corridor below Brooks Falls is now closed to all non-subsistence users. The closure will remain in place through October 31, "or until rescinded by the Superintendent." Source: [Katmai National Park and Preserve](#)

Katmai National Park and Preserve

Inter-bear violence

On September 30, the bear known as #469 attacked and killed the bear known as #402 on the Brooks River downriver from Brooks Falls. The incident was witnessed live on the park's webcams. The park's popular annual "Fat Bear Week" bracket, in which the public selects the most robust and rotund bear, was postponed, and *explore.org* hosted a special live public program to discuss the situation. The park's press release noted, "National parks like Katmai protect not only the wonders of nature, but also the harsh realities." Source: [Katmai National Park and Preserve](#)

Mammoth Cave National Park

Domestic assault sentencing

On May 1, 2023, a 40-year-old committed a domestic assault in the park. The individual had two prior convictions of assault in the fourth degree in 2020 and 2022. On October 1, they were sentenced to 37 months in prison and three years of supervised release for "committing a domestic assault as a habitual offender." Source: [U.S. Attorney's Office: Western District of Kentucky](#)

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park

Aggressive fox

On September 25, the park announced that they and the Woodstock (VT) Police Department had received multiple reports over 48 hours of an aggressive fox approaching visitors in the area around the Faulkner Trail on Mount Tom. Rabies is suspected as a possible cause. The park is working with the town, Vermont Fish and Wildlife, the NPS Office of Public Health, and the NPS Wildlife Health Branch to respond to the situation. Source: [Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park](#)

Olympic National Park

Water leak and advisory

On September 19, park staff discovered a leak in the main water line servicing the Kalaloch area. While assessing the leak, the valve connection failed. Staff worked to contain the leak and limit the loss of water. The park issued a boil water advisory for the Kalaloch area. Later that day, it was repaired and the advisory was lifted. Source: [Olympic National Park](#)

Olympic National Park

Rabies

On August 29, a bat was observed vocalizing and having difficulty flying near the Quinault Visitor Center. The following day, a deceased bat was found in the breezeway of the visitor center. It was tested and found positive for rabies. No humans were thought to have had contact with the bat. The park has cautioned visitors against handling bats, and to report animals that appear to be in distress. Source: [Olympic National Park](#)

Rocky Mountain National Park

Winter conditions

On September 21, Trail Ridge Road and Old Fall River Road were closed due to unusually snowy weather conditions. Several inches of snow and ice were present on the roads. They reopened the following day. Source: [Coloradoan](#)

Shenandoah National Park

Vehicle break-ins

On September 22, several vehicles were broken into in the Big Meadows area. Visitors reported stolen credit and debit cards, forms of identification, and other personal items. The park is asking the public for any information it can provide. Source: [Shenandoah National Park](#)

Wright Brothers National Memorial

Plane crash fatalities

On September 28, a single-engine Cirrus SR22 airplane crashed while trying to land at the park's First Flight Airport. It crashed in an adjacent wooded area. After the crash, a fire ensued. Four adults and one child passed away in the incident. There were no survivors. The incident management was supported by several agencies: the NPS, Kill Devil Hills (NC) fire and police departments, Kitty Hawk fire and police departments, North Carolina State Highway Patrol, North Carolina Forest Service, and the Dare County EMS, Emergency Management, and Sheriff's Office. The airport is closed until further notice, and the National Transportation Safety Board is making an investigation. Source: Wright Brothers National Memorial ([9/28](#), [10/1](#)), [WTKR](#)

Yellowstone National Park

Thermal burns

On September 16, a 60-year-old was hiking with one other individual and a dog off-trail near Mallard Lake Trailhead at Old Faithful when they broke through a thin soil crust into scalding water. The individual went to the park's medical clinic and was later transported via helicopter to Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center for treatment of second- and third-degree burns on their lower leg. Both walking off-trail and hiking with pets in thermal areas and on trails are not allowed in the park. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

Yellowstone National Park

Missing backpacker

On September 14, a 22-year-old was dropped off by boat at Terrace Point for a 7-day backpacking trip to summit Eagle Peak. On September 17, the individual called a family member from the top of Eagle Peak. They then failed to arrive for their boat pickup near Yellowstone Lake's Southeast Arm on September 20. The park began a search of the area, including 96 personnel, two helicopters, a search dog team, a drone, and forensic analysis of cellular activity. Supporting agencies on the search include the NPS (Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks), Park County (WY), and Teton County (WY). As of October 1, the individual had not been found. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

Yellowstone National Park

Cat travels 800+ miles

On June 4, while camping at the Fishing Bridge RV Park in Yellowstone, a couple's pet cat, named Rayne Beau, "was spooked and ran off into the dense trees." The family spent several days putting out treats and toys to attempt to lure the cat back. The couple left when their camping stay ended on June 8, unsuccessful at finding Rayne Beau. About two months later, the cat was spotted in a neighborhood in Roseville, California, located over 800 miles from Yellowstone. A person who lived nearby gave the cat food and water until they were able to trap Rayne Beau on August 3. The cat was admitted to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The shelter utilized Rayne Beau's microchip to contact the couple, who live in Salinas, California, and they were reunited on August 4. The cat had lost six pounds in the incident. It is unclear whether or not the cat walked or had been transported by other individuals toward Roseville. Source: [NBC News](#), [The Sun](#)

Wildfires

- *Crater Lake National Park* - On July 17, the Middle Fork Fire was discovered in the Middle Fork area in the northwest corner of the park. As of September 19, the fire was 5,286 acres and 70% contained, with 0 personnel currently assigned. It is being monitored by NPS staff. As of September 13, the Bald Crater Loop, Bert Creek, and Boundary Springs Trails remain closed due to hazardous conditions. Source: [Inciweb](#), Crater Lake National Park ([8/11](#), [9/13](#))
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - On August 26, the park learned of the Flint Gap Fire, burning near Hannah Mountain, south of Abrams Creek. As of September 24, the fire was estimated at 58 acres and 95% contained. The park closed Backcountry Campsites 14-16, Parson Branch Road, the Rabbit Creek Trail from Abrams Creek to Cades Cove, and the Hannah Mountain Trail from Parson Branch Road to Little Bottom Trail. On September 3, the park announced that the fire was started by lightning. Source: Great Smoky Mountains National Park ([8/28](#), [8/29](#), [8/30](#), [9/3](#), [9/13](#), [9/20](#), [9/22](#), [9/24](#))

- *North Cascades National Park*
 - On July 23, the park closed Cascade River Road, Cascade Pass Trail, and the Johannesburg Cross-country Zone due to the nearby Pincer Two Fire, located on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. On September 18, the Cascade River Road and Cascade Pass Trail reopened. As of September 30, the Johannesburg Cross-country Zone remains closed. Source: [North Cascades National Park \(current conditions\)](#)
 - On August 9, the Ruby Fire was discovered burning on the south side of Ruby Mountain in Ross Lake National Recreation Area (part of the North Cascades Complex). It is believed to be lightning-caused. As of September 24, there were closures on the Fourth of July Trail, Panther Creek Trail, the Thunder Creek Trail north of Junction camps, seven backcountry camps, and the Ruby Cross-country Zone. As of September 23, the fire was 1,336 acres and 0% contained, with 12 personnel assigned. Source: North Cascades National Park ([8/9](#), [8/10](#), [fire closure page](#)), [Inciweb](#)
- *Pinnacles National Park* - On September 27, a fire started near the campground. As of September 27, it was 17 acres and 50% contained. The cause is under investigation. Source: [CalFire](#), [BenitoLink](#)
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - On August 3, lightning caused the Coffeepot Fire in the southwest corner of the park, about 2.5 miles southeast of Case Mountain. It was quickly contained by fire crews at 0.1 acres. After "nearly a week of no activity, a burning tree fell and rolled over the containment line, and the fire began to grow." As of September 20, the fire was 14,104 acres and 93% contained with 637 personnel assigned. On September 21, the park lifted all road closures and all trail closures except the Lady Bug Trail. Source: Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks ([8/16](#), [9/20](#)), [Inciweb](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Acadia National Park* - The 70-year-old cyclist that crashed on Park Loop Road on September 9 (see [9/18/24 Coalition Report](#)) passed away due to their injuries on September 11. Source: [Bangor Daily News](#)
- *Fire Island National Seashore* - Mosquito samples taken from Watch Hill on September 3 and September 16, and at Carrington Tract on September 9 tested positive for West Nile Virus. This is now six documented samples of West Nile Virus at the park (see [9/4/24](#) and [9/18/24 Coalition Reports](#)). The NPS and Suffolk County (NY) will continue to monitor the situation. Source: Fire Island National Seashore ([9/3](#), [9/26](#))
- *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - Volcanic unrest remains variable (see [9/18/24 Coalition Report](#)). On September 18, the park reopened Hilina Pali Road and

Kulanaokuaiki Campground because eruption hazards in the middle East Rift Zone of Kīlauea volcano had eased. However, that afternoon, the middle East Rift Zone eruption significantly increased in volume. The Maunaulu Trail and parking area, Nāpau Trail, Nāulu Trail, and Kealakomo Overlook were again closed to all use due to continued eruption hazards, including gas emissions and the potential for wildland fire. On September 30, the park reopened the Maunaulu Trail and parking lot, Pu'uhuluhulu, the Nāulu Trail, and the Nāpau Trail to the junction with Nāulu Trail. As of September 30, Nāpau Trail past Makaopuhi crater, Nāpau campground and Nāpau crater all remain closed. The Nāpau campground was inundated with lava over "four eruptive episodes between September 15 and 20," and a wildfire ignited by an eruption burned about 90 acres of forest. Only one campsite remains at Nāpau. Source: Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park ([9/18](#), [9/19](#), [9/30](#))

- *Yellowstone National Park* - On September 19, the NPS released bodycam footage for the July 4, 2024, officer-involved shooting at Canyon Village (see [7/10/24](#) and [7/24/24 Coalition Reports](#)). The incident is still under investigation. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - On September 16, the park lifted its fishing restriction on the Firehole River due to cooler water temperatures. Fishing had been restricted since July due to high water temperatures and low flows. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

Acknowledgments

This newsletter is supported through Coalition staff and invaluable volunteers:

- Editor: Katie Wallace
- Tech and Production Support: Amy Gilbert Fehir, Steve Pittleman, Emily Thompson
- Regular Correspondent: Don Hellmann, Chris Soller
- Issue Contributors: Kevin FitzGerald, David Manski, Bill Walters

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

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

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