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The Coalition Report

Wednesday, September 18, 2024

Coalition Actions

The Coalition submitted [a letter](#) to the Environmental Protection Agency supporting its partial disapproval of Wyoming's regional haze implementation plan.

We issued [a press release](#) thanking Senators Alex Padilla and Laphonza Butler, and Representative Adam Schiff for their letter to the President supporting designation of S  t  t  la as a national monument.

The Coalition submitted [a letter](#) to the NPS expressing disappointment with the pilot program to permit bicycles in Grand Teton National Park's Moose-Wilson corridor. The letter requests the park be provided additional resources to collect wildlife and visitor use data and quantify both.

We submitted [a letter](#) to the California Fish and Game Commission supporting a proposal to restrict nighttime fishing in specified areas to protect the Scripp's murrelet in Channel Islands National Park and Channel Island National Marine Sanctuary.

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.

- *DOI science integrity policy* - On September 5, the Department of the Interior

announced an update to its science integrity policy, mandating that scientific inquiry across its agencies should be free from political or special-interest interference, establishing science-based decision making, ensuring scientific rigor, codifying merit-based hiring and retention of scientists, and updating procedures for investigating integrity concerns. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

- *Questioning utility of Wilderness Act* - E&E News published [an article](#) about some efforts to rewrite the Wilderness Act in order to better manage natural resources and support traditional Indigenous practices. Source: *E&E News*
- *Changing wilderness use patterns* - New research by scientists at the University of Montana shows that recreation is shifting toward shorter overnight trips and more day-use. Source: [The Spokesman-Review](#)

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Appalachian National Scenic Trail* - The NPS published a Visitor Use Management Plan for the Virginia Triple Crown Segment of the trail. The plan was developed collaboratively with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club, U.S. National Forest Service, Virginia Department of Transportation, Roanoke County, Botetourt County, Roanoke City, and Roanoke-Alleghany Regional Commission, with input from the public. Source: [Appalachian National Scenic Trail](#)
- *Canaveral National Seashore* - The park, working with the NPS' Historic Preservation Training Center, recently completed a project to restore the roof of the Seminole Rest caretaker's house. The project was funded by fee revenue. Source: [Canaveral National Seashore](#)
- *Crater Lake National Park* - On August 28, a black bear was seen swimming in Crater Lake and walking on Wizard Island. It later swam back to the shoreline and climbed out of the crater. It was the first bear observed swimming in the lake in "many decades." Source: [KOIN](#), [Crater Lake National Park Facebook page](#)
- *Death Valley National Park* - The park announced that it experienced the "hottest meteorological summer (June-August) on record" this year, with an average temperature of 104.5F. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)
- *Denali National Park and Preserve* - *High Country News* published [an article](#) about the return of wildlife on the western end of the park's road due to the closure at the Pretty Rocks landslide, which has been in place since 2021. A bridge over the landslide, currently under construction, is expected to open to the public in 2027. Source: *High Country News*
- *Dinosaur National Monument* - Researchers from the U.S. Geological Survey and

University of Vermont have published a report documenting the potential impacts of water extraction from the Yampa River upon park resources. It also offers solutions for minimizing negative impacts. Source: [U.S. Geological Survey](#)

- *Fire Island National Seashore* - Stony Brook University Libraries recently received a donation of a collection of documents from the Barbash family that chronicle the establishment of Fire Island as a National Park Service unit. The donation was made on September 11, the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the park. Source: [Stony Brook University News](#)
- *Gateway National Recreation Area* - The week of September 9, the park began a project to renovate the eastern end of the Jacob Riis Park Boardwalk, rehabilitate about 20 benches, and construct a new accessible ramp near the bathhouse. The \$2.7 million project is being funded by fee revenue. The project is expected to be complete by the end of the year. The boardwalk will be closed east of the bathhouse during the duration of the project. Source: [Gateway National Recreation Area](#)
- *Gateway National Recreation Area* - On September 13, the NPS extended New York City's lease of Floyd Bennett Field by one year. [Editor note: See "Incidents" section below for information on protests about the lease extension.] Source: [New York Post](#)
- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - The *San Francisco Business Times* published [an interview](#) with staff from the Presidio Trust about their current efforts to improve accessibility and visitor amenities in the Presidio. Source: *San Francisco Business Times*
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - On September 13, the park successfully relocated 100 bison from the North Rim to the Intertribal Buffalo Council, which brought the bison to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in South Dakota. The relocation is part of an effort to manage bison overpopulation in the park outlined in the 2017 Initial Bison Herd Reduction Plan. The effort is supported by the NPS Office of Public Health, Intertribal Buffalo Council, Arizona Game and Fish Department, the U.S. Geological Survey Fort Collins Science Center, and U.S. Forest Service. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - The park was given the 2023 Excellence in Education Award at the NPS National Service Awards ceremony. The award honors "Seeking Paths in Nature (SPiN)," a curriculum program that integrates Aniyuwiya (Cherokee) culture and traditional ecological knowledge with park themes. The project was started and funded by the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, and co-created between park staff, U.S. Forest Service staff, educators from Cherokee middle schools, staff from the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, and members of the Cherokee Speakers Council. The award was dedicated posthumously to Julie Townsend, who served as SPiN project

coordinator from 2015-2019. Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)

- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park - Valpo.Life* published [a biography](#) of Deb Butterfield, a six-year volunteer at the park who interprets history and plays and teaches the dulcimer for park visitors. Source: *Valpo.Life*
- *Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Program* (an NPS-administered program) - The NPS has opened project applications for JACS grants and Norman Y. Mineta Japanese American Confinement Education Grants. They are due on November 14. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Joshua Tree National Park* - The *Los Angeles Times* published [an article](#) about the park's Preventative Search and Rescue program. Ana Marini, the NPS lead for the program, is featured in the article. Source: *Los Angeles Times*
- *Joshua Tree National Park, Mojave National Preserve* - The Yale School of the Environment published [an article](#) about climate change threats to Joshua trees, including hotter and drier weather, and recent wildfires in Mojave National Preserve. Source: *YaleEnvironment360*
- *Keweenaw National Historical Park* - On September 26, four new sculptures will be unveiled at the Quincy Dry House Ruins along US-41. Kasey Koski was commissioned to create the sculptures, which honor "the workers and families who were once sprawled densely throughout the Copper Country." Source: [Keweenaw National Historical Park](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - In August, during the Smithsonian Castle Revitalization Project, a 30-foot-deep, 9-foot-in-diameter, brick-lined cistern was discovered. It was found "empty and sealed." Source: [ABC7](#)
- *New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park* - On September 22, the park will unveil a new whale sculpture at Captain Paul Cuffe Park called "The Water We're Swimming In." The sculpture was created by Elaine Alder out of marine debris collected off the coast of Massachusetts. It is intended to bring public attention to marine debris issues. It was created with support from the NPS, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the New Bedford Whaling Museum. Source: [New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park](#)
- *New River Gorge National Park and Preserve* - Jacki Wright was selected as the 2023 Volunteer of the Year for Region 1. Jacki has volunteered at the park's visitor centers, supported events and programming, and has tended to the park's native wildflower gardens since March 2022. Source: [Gauley River National Recreation Area](#)
- *Olympic National Park* - On September 16, the park announced the opening of a

prospectus for a 12-year concession contract providing lodging, food and beverage, retail, and "other appropriate services" at Lake Crescent Lodge, Log Cabin Resort, Fairholme Store, and Hurricane Ridge. The existing contract concludes on January 31, 2026. Proposals are due on December 19. Source: [Olympic National Park](#)

- *Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants* (an NPS-administered program) - On September 10, the NPS announced the award of \$12.1 million in grants to 17 programs in 15 states for the preservation of historic buildings in rural communities. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Petrified Forest National Park* - Earlier this month, the park began construction of new restrooms adjacent to the Rainbow Forest Museum. The project is being funded by fee revenue. Source: [Petrified Forest National Park](#)
- *Piscataway Park* - On September 25, the park will host a public meeting to discuss the status of the Fort Washington Marina. The park recently engaged in a concession prospectus process for long-term management of the marina, but the offeror and NPS were unable to reach an agreement due to "extensive deferred maintenance issues on the property, as well as the need for dredging." Negotiations have ended and there is no current operator for the marina. Source: [Piscataway Park](#)
- *Rock Creek Park* - On September 5, the National Capital Planning Commission approved the park's golf course rehabilitation project. Source: [Rock Creek Park](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - *The Denver Post* published [an article](#) about the effects of car exhaust and agriculture from local communities on ecosystems in the park. Excess nitrogen and ozone are affecting sensitive alpine environments. Park scientist Jim Cheatham is quoted in the article. Source: *The Denver Post*
- *San Antonio Missions National Historical Park* - The General Service Administration has issued a pre-solicitation notice to determine potential market interest in order to acquire a new lease for the park's headquarters. The park's current commercial lease "is nearing expiration." Source: [San Antonio Missions National Historical Park](#)
- *Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument* - On September 9, the Department of the Interior issued a Record of Decision approving NV Energy's Greenlink West powerline project to cross the southern edge of the park. The plan includes a paleontological resources mitigation plan for the 11 power pole footings that will be installed in the park. [Editor note: See "Other Department of the Interior News" below for DOI press release on the project.] Source: [8 News Now](#)
- *Voyageurs National Park* - The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* published [an article](#) about the Voyageurs Wolf Project, a nine-year study of wolves in a 902-square-mile

area that spans across the park, private property, timber company lands, national forest, and state forest. The project is funded by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and private donors. Source: *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

- *Wind Cave National Park* - On September 16, the park began a project to improve the road surface of Red Valley Road (NPS 6) to better facilitate low-clearance vehicles. The project will go through "at least" September 27. The road will be closed from the junction of Highland Ridge Road (NPS 5) to the border with Custer State Park throughout the project. Source: [Wind Cave National Park](#)
- *Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve* - On September 3, the park released a concession prospectus for a 10-year contract providing guided tours of historic buildings within the Kennecott Mines National Historic Landmark. Applications are due by November 1. Source: [Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - *The Mercury News/The Press Democrat* published [an article](#) about the restoration of Ackerson Meadow, considered the largest wetlands restoration in Yosemite's history. The project includes restoring a 3-mile-long, 14-foot-deep, 100-foot-wide ditch and planting 425,000 native plants. The restoration has been ongoing for two years and work is expected to wrap up this year. The area is currently closed to the public, but is expected to be open once work is complete. The \$17.7 million project was supported by the NPS, Yosemite Conservancy, American Rivers, the Bonneville Environmental Foundation, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the California Wildlife Conservation Board, Google, the National Park Foundation, and the U.S. Forest Service. The property was purchased by the Trust for Public Land in 2016 and donated to the park. Source: [The Press Democrat](#)
- *Zion National Park* - On September 4, the park celebrated the commission of the NPS' first all-electric bus fleet. In attendance were NPS Director Chuck Sams, General Services Administration Administrator Robin Carnahan, Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians Chairman Roland Maldonado, staff from the Zion National Park Forever Project and National Park Foundation, and other local leaders. The project has been supported by federal, state, local, and non-profit organizations, anchored by a \$33 million grant from the Department of Transportation. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#), Don Falvey

Personnel Changes

- *Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park, Shenandoah National Park* - J. Tracy Stakely was selected as new superintendent of the two parks. Tracy has 26 years of NPS experience, most recently as the superintendent of Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie National Historical Park and Charles Pinckney National Historic Site. He will begin his new role on October 7. Source: [Cedar Creek and Belle Grove](#)

National Historical Park

- *National Park Foundation* - On September 16, the National Park Foundation announced that they have appointed Jeff Reinbold as their new president and CEO-elect. Jeff has over 30 years of NPS experience, most recently as the head of the Office of Partnerships and Civic Engagement. The decision is effective December 1 and Jeff will formally assume the role on February 1. Source: [National Park Foundation](#)
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* – Anne Altman was selected as the new superintendent. Anne has 23 years of NPS experience, most recently as the deputy superintendent at Point Reyes. She will start her new role on September 22. Source: [Point Reyes National Seashore](#)
- *Wildland Fire Program* - Seth Morphis was selected as the new senior policy expert on smoke management specialist for the NPS Branch of Wildland Fire, a position that also supports the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Seth has many years of federal service, including time at the NPS, Department of Defense, and U.S. Forest Service. Source: [National Park Service Wildland Fire Program](#)

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

- Jean Bullard, 100, passed away on June 29. She worked for the NPS from 1971-1975 and 1978-1981. Her work included being the associate editor of the NPS Newsletter and Courier and an interpretive specialist in the Rocky Mountain Region (now Intermountain Region). Source: Kent Bullard
- Alan Acton Bush, 62, passed away on August 30. Alan worked for the NPS from 1986 to 2019, including at Yellowstone National Park as a law enforcement ranger. Source: [KBZK](#)
- Bonnie June Coston, 95, passed away on September 4. Bonnie worked as the manager of the camp store at McDonald Lodge in Glacier National Park for seven years until her retirement. Source: [Legacy/Daily Inter Lake](#)
- Larry Vinson Knight, 89, passed away on September 10. Larry "worked summers as a bellhop at Zion National Park" in his youth. Source: [Legacy/Olpin Family Mortuary](#)
- Marjorie "Marge" Ruth Rothfuss, 84, passed away on July 15. Marge worked for the concessioner in Yosemite National Park in 1960, which is where she met her

husband, NPS ranger Ed Rothfuss. Marge lived in many parks over the course of Ed's NPS career. Source: [Legacy/Daily Inter Lake](#)

- James "Jim" Wray Stewart, 90, passed away on August 1. Jim worked for the NPS for 38 years as a landscape architect, park planner, and assistant director for planning, retiring in 1995. His work included time at Everglades National Park, in Philadelphia, PA, and at the headquarters of the Department of the Interior in Arlington, VA. He received a DOI award for meritorious service. Source: [Dignity Memorial](#)

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 September 20](#) on a grazing management plan for the two co-managed parks. Grazing is currently administered through special use permits and interagency agreements with the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service. Source: [Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park](#)
- *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](#)
- *Bluestone National Scenic River, Gauley River National Recreation Area, New River Gorge National Park and Preserve* - Public comment is [open through September 30](#) on a fire and vegetation management plan for the three park units. Source: [New River Gorge National Park and Preserve](#)
- *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 September 26](#) on a proposal to allow bicycles on the Stud Horse Trail network. Source: [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#)
- *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](#)

- *Grand Canyon National Park* - Public comment is [open through September 28](#) on the establishment of criteria and procedures that would streamline compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The plan was prepared in consultation with the Arizona State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - Public comment is [open through October 12](#) on an increase in backcountry permit fees. Source: [Grand Canyon 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](#)
- *Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through September 26](#) on proposed fee increases for campsites, dump stations, and boat launches. Source: [Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area](#)
- *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](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - Public comment is [open through September 30](#) on a visitor access management plan. Source: [Yosemite National Park](#)

Other Department of the Interior News

- *Trout removed from endangered list* - On September 4, the Department of the Interior announced that the Apache trout has been delisted from the federally endangered and threatened species list. The announcement comes after over 50 years of interagency efforts to restore the species in the White Mountains of eastern Arizona. It is the first sportfish to make a full recovery. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Off-shore wind* - On September 5, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management announced the approval of the Maryland Offshore Wind Project. On September 16, it announced that it will hold an offshore wind energy lease sale on October 29 for eight areas on the Outer Continental Shelf off Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine. Source: Department of the Interior ([9/5](#), [9/16](#))
- *2 NV energy projects approved* - On September 9, the Bureau of Land Management announced that it is issuing Records of Decision for the Greenlink West

Transmission Project and Libra Solar Project. The Greenlink West project will create a system of new transmission lines and facilities across federal, state, Tribal, and private lands from North Las Vegas to Reno in Nevada. The Libra project will include a solar facility and battery energy storage system in Mineral County, Nevada. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

- *\$236 million for wildfire management* - On September 10, the Department of the Interior announced \$236 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding to support the reduction of wildfire risk, improved wildland firefighter training, and burned area rehabilitation. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$157 million for migratory birds and habitat* - On September 10, the Department of the Interior 's Migratory Bird Commission announced the award of \$46.2 million in North American Wetlands Conservation Act funds across 17 states. Those grants will be matched by \$99.1 million in partner funds. They also announced the award of \$11.7 million from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund to conserve habitat in seven national wildlife refuges in seven states. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$43.5 million for water storage* - On September 6, the Department of the Interior announced the availability of \$43.5 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for small water storage projects, available to 19 states in the western United States. The two application deadlines are December 12, 2024, and July 15, 2025. 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.

House Actions

September 12: The House filed House Report 118-667 for H.R. 5490, a bill to amend the Coastal Barrier Resources Act to expand the John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System, and for other purposes, with an amendment. The bill could have an impact on several National Park System units located on the East Coast.

Senate Actions

No Senate business relating to the National Park Service was conducted during this reporting period.

Incidents

Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.

Acadia National Park

Bicycle accident

On September 9, a 70-year-old was cycling on the Park Loop Road near the Cadillac North Ridge Trail crossing when their foot dislodged from a clip-in pedal and they lost control of their bicycle. They took a head-first crash, resulting in "significant injuries." They were wearing a helmet at the time of the crash. NPS staff arrived on scene shortly after the accident, and "performed life saving measures." Personnel from the Bar Harbor (ME) Fire Department transported the patient to downtown Bar Harbor, and the individual was then transferred by a LifeFlight of Maine helicopter to the Eastern Maine Medical Center in Bangor. The patient was said to be in "critical condition." Source: [Acadia National Park](#)

Bandelier National Monument

Flash flood

On September 5, a flash flood occurred in Frijoles Canyon, with water levels at 5.74 feet. Several closures were enacted due to damage, including the Alcove House Trail and most of Bandelier's backcountry, except for high alpine areas. The Frey Trail, Pueblo Loop Trail, and Visitor Center were temporarily closed and reopened on September 6. Bandelier's Historic District was not damaged. Source: Bandelier National Monument (9/6 - [first](#), [second](#))

Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area

Bridge failure

On September 12, the Tennessee Department of Transportation closed the Pine Creek Bridge because it was deemed unsafe. The bridge is outside Big South Fork's boundaries, but is the access point for O&W Road in the park. There is no estimated reopening date yet. The NPS will meet with Scott County (TN) the week of September 15 to discuss next steps. Source: [Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area](#)

Blue Ridge Parkway

Motorcyclist fatality

On September 9, a 67-year-old was riding a motorcycle with a group southbound near milepost 377 when they failed to make a turn, departed from the lane, and hit a car traveling northbound. The operator of the motorcycle passed away in the incident. The driver of the northbound car sustained minor injuries. Buncombe County (NC) Fire personnel supported the emergency response. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)

Death Valley National Park

Burro fatalities

On September 11, the park announced that 11 burros were found deceased near Owls Hole Spring. It is believed to be due to a toxic algal bloom caused by warm temperatures and burro feces. Park staff have installed a sign adjacent to the spring warning visitors that the water may be hazardous to humans and pets. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area

Fatality

On August 41, a 50-year-old was found deceased along the trail at Sawkill Glen adjacent to the Mott Street Bridge. The Pike County (PA) Coroner determined that the individual died of "natural causes." Source: [Tri-County Independent](#)

Gateway National Recreation Area

Protests against migrant camp

On September 7, a caravan of "more than 30 vehicles" and several dozen individuals held a rally outside Floyd Bennett Field to protest the lease of the site to New York City as an encampment for asylum seekers. The lease was set to expire on September 14. Protestors stated they were upset at increases in crime in the neighborhood, about immigration policies, and about their tax dollars paying for shelters. *[Editor note: Later that week, the lease was renewed for another year; see "Around the Parks" section above.]* Source: [New York Post](#)

Grand Canyon National Park

Rafter fatalities

On September 9, a 71-year-old on a rafting trip was reported missing in the area of Lower Nankoweap Camp (river mile 53.5). The following day, a search helicopter located a deceased individual near river mile 63.5. It is believed to be the missing individual. The NPS and Coconino County (AZ) Medical Examiner are investigating the incident. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

On September 7, a 59-year-old on a private rafting trip was found deceased by other members of their party at Poncho's Kitchen (river mile 137). The NPS and Coconino County (AZ) Medical Examiner are investigating the incident. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Hiker fall

On September 2, a visitor took a fall on the Laurel Falls Trail. NPS staff responded to the incident, and the visitor was transported to LeConte Medical Center. The individual's condition was not released. Source: [WVLT](#)

Guadalupe Mountains National Park

Well failure

On September 9, the Dog Canyon well failed, resulting in the park closing that area. Well pump issues have been ongoing since August and the well is now considered "no longer viable." The park is working to fix the issue. Source: [Guadalupe Mountains National Park](#)

Gulf Islands National Seashore

Hurricane Francine

On September 9, the park experienced flooding due to Hurricane Francine. Much of the park was closed for clean-up and repair. On September 14, the Mississippi District reopened and commercial services to Ship Island began anew. On September 15, the Fort Pickens area reopened. Fort Massachusetts on Ship Island was expected to remain inaccessible through September 21. As of September 14, beachside parking lots remain closed. Source: Gulf Islands National Seashore ([9/13](#), [9/14](#))

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

Volcanic unrest

On September 15, an intrusion of magma began in Kīlauea's middle East Rift Zone. On September 16, the U.S. Geological Survey's Hawaiian Volcano Observatory measured heightened gas emissions and volcanic unrest, causing it to raise its Volcano Alert Level from "advisory" to "watch." The park closed Chain of Craters Road due to the potential of an eruption in the region. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)

Lake Mead National Recreation Area

Drowning

Over Labor Day weekend, a 19-year-old waded into deep water and "fell off a shelf" in the Nelson's Landing area. They were not wearing a personal flotation device. The individual went unresponsive and a bystander helped retrieve them from the water. Resuscitation efforts were unsuccessful. Source: [News3LV](#)

North Cascades National Park

Missing hiker found alive after a month

On August 3, park staff found an abandoned car at the Hannegan trailhead with all its windows rolled down and the wallet of a 39-year-old sitting on the dashboard. A dog was found eight miles down the trail, later identified as belonging to the individual. A search was started, and eye witnesses stated they saw the hiker near the Chilliwack River without any overnight supplies on July 31. Ground and air searches were conducted for several weeks. On August 30, a Pacific Northwest Trail Association trail crew heard the individual calling for help in Chilliwack Basin. The team called for a helicopter, which used short-haul techniques to transport them to a waiting ambulance. He was taken to United General Hospital in Sedro-Wooley, Washington. The individual was said to be "uninjured,"

but "weak from malnourishment." They said that they had hiked that trail before, but the river crossing had changed since their last excursion, leading to them getting disoriented.

Source: [Cascadia Daily News](#), [USA Today](#), [KPLC](#)

Padre Island National Seashore

Fish waste citation

On September 10, the park announced that it had issued a citation to an individual for killing, then leaving behind a decapitated tiger shark and bull shark, a deceased and mutilated sting ray, and about 15 crabs in August. It is legal to harvest these animals, but only with "the intent to retain the fish for consumption or bait." The NPS worked with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to locate and interview the suspect, who confessed to the incident. The TPWD will seek civil restitution for the "assessed monetary value of the sharks." Source: [Padre Island National Seashore](#)

Rocky Mountain National Park

Reckless driving

On September 8, a 23-year-old sped through the Grand Lake Entrance Station. Law enforcement were notified and attempted to pull the individual over, but the individual began driving at "high speeds" and in a reckless manner, causing law enforcement to ease off pursuit. The park requested support from the Estes Park (CO) Police Department and Larimer County Sheriff's Office. Law enforcement attempted to slow the vehicle at the Deer Ridge Junction and also placed a tire deflation device near Beaver Meadows Entrance Station. Near the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, the suspect hit another vehicle with three individuals inside. All three individuals were transported by ambulance to Estes Park Health, one with "critical injuries." After the collision, the suspect took off on foot northeast toward homes along High Drive in the town of Estes Park. Residents were advised by law enforcement to "shelter in place." The individual evaded law enforcement until the following morning when they were arrested near High Drive. Source: Rocky Mountain National Park ([9/8](#), [9/9](#))

San Juan National Historic Site

Feral cat lawsuit

The park has put a plan to remove over 200 feral cats from the park on hold while a lawsuit against the plan goes through court proceedings. The NPS is being sued by a nonprofit called Alley Cat Allies, which claims the decision violates the National Environmental Policy Act. A ruling is expected in early 2025. Source: [AP News](#)

Yosemite National Park

Hotel closure

On September 11, the park announced that while undertaking a roof replacement project on the main building of the Wawona Hotel, they found a "need for more intensive

investigation and assessment of the hotel." The hotel will thus close on December 2, with no estimated reopening date. Source: [Los Angeles Times](#)

Yosemite National Park

Backpacker fatality

On September 12, an NPS staff member found a note on a vehicle, stating that the owner, a 61-year-old, was backpacking to the Ostrander Lake area from August 23-27. The park began a search and located the individual deceased on September 14. The incident is still under investigation, but a family member of the individual stated that they "may have lost track of the trail," based on initial evidence. Source: [The New York Times](#), [Yosemite National Park Facebook page](#), [The Tribune](#)

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 16, 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 13, the fire was estimated at 46 acres and was 0% 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](#))
- *Lassen Volcanic National Park* - On July 24, the Park Fire started off Upper Park Road in Upper Bidwell Park, east of the city of Chico, California. The fire started after a 42-year-old set their car on fire, put it in neutral, then pushed it into a ravine. The individual was arrested. On July 27, the fire approached the park's western edge, causing the park to close. Visitors and park employees were evacuated from the area. On August 17, the park opened Highway 89 from the Northwest Entrance at Manzanita Lake to the parking lot at Devastated Area. On August 25, Highway 89 through the park reopened. As of September 15, the fire was 429,603 acres and 98% contained, with 471 personnel assigned. Source: Lassen Volcanic National Park ([7/27](#), [8/16](#), [8/25 Facebook post](#)), [CAL FIRE](#), [The Washington Post](#)
- *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. As of September 16, they remain closed. Source: [North Cascades National Park \(current conditions\)](#)

- On July 25, the town of Stehekin in Lake Chelan National Recreation Area (part of the North Cascades Complex) evacuated all visitors due to a Level 2 order ("be ready to leave") for evacuation due to the Pioneer Fire. About 130 people left the area via ferry. The fire started on June 8 about 18 miles down lake from Stehekin at Pioneer Creek due to "undetermined" causes. On July 28, Stehekin Valley to High Bridge moved to Level 3 evacuation, requiring all residents to leave. On August 23, the evacuation notice for Stehekin was reduced to Level 1 ("there is a wildfire in the area"). As of September 8, it was 38,735 acres and 23% contained, with 401 personnel assigned. Source: [The Wenatchee World \(7/25, 8/9\)](#), [Inciweb](#), North Cascades National Park ([Fire Closures page](#), [8/23 press release](#))
- 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. On August 9, the park closed Colonial Creek South Campground and boat launch, the Diablo Lake area from State Route 20 to Thunder Creek, and nearby trails and backcountry camps. As of September 16, the fire was 1,300 acres and 0% contained, with 42 personnel assigned. Source: North Cascades National Park ([8/9, 8/10, fire closure page](#)), [Inciweb](#)
- *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 16, the fire was 14,086 acres and 79% contained with 637 personnel assigned. The portion of South Fork Drive within the parks is closed. Access to the Mineral King area is also closed, including all campgrounds and trails. Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#), [Inciweb](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - Over September 4 and 5, several feet of sand washed away from the area in front of the Buxton Formerly Used Defense Site along Old Lighthouse Beach. Soil and groundwater contaminated with petroleum from historic military use is now exposed to the tides. Park staff noticed strong petroleum smells and reported it to the National Response Center, operated by the Coast Guard, Army Corps of Engineers, and the State of North Carolina. As a result, the park expanded the size of the closed beach area, which has been in effect since September 1, 2023 (see [9/6/23](#), [3/6/24](#), [4/3/24](#), [5/15/24 Coalition Reports](#)) . The closure now encompasses the area from the southern end of beachfront

homes in Buxton to approximately a quarter-mile south of the old lighthouse jetties. On September 13, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced that a contract was awarded to remove contaminated soils at the site. Work is expected to begin by September 20. Source: Cape Hatteras National Seashore (9/5 - [first](#), [second](#)), [OBX Today](#)

- *Fire Island National Seashore* - Mosquito samples taken on August 28 at the Carrington Tract and Watch Hill tested positive for West Nile Virus. These are the third and fourth cases in the park this year, following one previous detection at each site (see [9/4/24 Coalition Report](#)). The park, in collaboration with the Suffolk County (NY) Department of Health Services Arthropod-Borne Disease Laboratory, will continue weekly surveillance. Currently, no actions are deemed necessary to protect the public. Source: [Fire Island National Seashore](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - On September 5, the park reopened overnight accommodations. They were closed on August 29 due to a break in the Transcanyon Waterline. On September 12, the South Rim moved from Stage 3 to Stage 2 water restrictions, including reopening camper services by the concessioner, turning on water at campgrounds, and lifting some fire restrictions. Source: Grand Canyon National Park ([9/5](#), [9/12](#))
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - On September 13, a 20-year-old was arrested for vandalizing property during protests against Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's address to U.S. Congress on July 24 (see [8/7/24 Coalition Report](#)). The individual was recorded on video spray painting graffiti on a fountain in front of Union Station and on two flagpoles in Columbus Circle. The individual faces one charge of willfully injuring or depredating federal property. Source: [Manistee News Advocate](#)
- *Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park* - On September 16, the Environmental Protection Agency began remediation of asbestos and other hazardous materials in the Allied Textile Printing site (see [1/24/24 Coalition Report](#)). The project is expected to take "several months." The cleanup will allow the park to open the Quarry Lawn and Riverwalk, which was recently added to the park and renovated as part of a \$7.6 million project, in collaboration with local government. Source: [northjersey.com/Paterson Press](#)

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

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

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