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The Coalition Report

Wednesday, September 4, 2024

Greetings, Coalition Members!

Please take a moment and update your contact information so you can receive an Annual Report in the mail later this year!

Coalition Actions

The Coalition published [a gifsplainer](#) supporting the designation of additional California national monuments.

We sent [a letter](#) to President Joe Biden in support of the designation of Sáttítla, located in the Medicine Lake Highlands of Northern California, as a national monument

The Coalition joined four other conservation organizations in submitting [comments](#) on the Bureau of Land Management's New Mexico Office 2025 First Quarter Oil and Gas Lease Sale draft environmental assessment, emphasizing guidance from the BLM for the deferral of some parcels due to low potential, ecological ramifications, and the projected impact of climate change.

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.

- *\$55.6 billion NPS economic impact* - On August 27, the NPS released a report, "2023 National Park Visitor Spending Effects," that found that NPS units contributed \$55.6 billion toward the economy and supported 415,400 jobs. This was an annual record for the NPS. An [online tool](#) allows users to view year-by-year trend data and select by park unit. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *E-bike FONSI* - On August 23, the NPS announced a Finding of No Significant Impact for its environmental assessment related to superintendent authority over the management of electric bicycles in national park units. Park managers may continue to make decisions about e-bikes on a case-by-case basis. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *NPF receives \$100 million* - On August 26, the National Park Foundation announced they received a \$100 million grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc., its largest-ever grant. They have committed to using the funds toward four priorities: "inspire the next generation of park stewards," "conserve and preserve threatened parks and wildlife," "ensure a world-class visitor experience," and "tell a more complete story of America." Source: [National Park Foundation](#)
- *Park Science magazine* - On August 30, Volume 38, Number 1 of the NPS magazine *Park Science* was published. The issue is focused on "how park and partner scientists are working to understand extreme weather impacts" and "how other kinds of extremes can affect our practice of science." Source: [Park Science](#)
- *Effects of low staffing on the NPS* - *The Wall Street Journal* published [an article](#) outlining the effects national parks are experiencing under a regime of low staffing and high visitation. The number of full-time equivalent NPS employees fell 20% between 2010 and 2023, while park visitation rose 16% during that time, also accompanied by more acreage to manage. The article outlines issues, such as reduction in programming, the closure of visitor centers and bathrooms, long lines, and vandalism. It also covers many of the reasons for staff shortages, including housing, long hiring processes, and low staff morale and burnout. [Editor note: Coalition Executive Council member Sue Fritzke is quoted in the article, reflecting on her previous experience as superintendent at Capitol Reef.] Source: *The Wall Street Journal*
- *BASE jumping in National Parks* - *The Washington Post* published [an article](#) about efforts by the BASE jumping community to legalize their sport in national park units, and the dangers associated with continuing its illegality. Source: *The Washington Post*

- *NPS intern summit* - From August 5-9, nearly 100 interns from NPS programs participated in the annual Internship Career and Leadership Workshop. The summit allowed attendees to explore career paths and present their accomplishments and research while networking and learning from professionals in the field. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Appalachian National Scenic Trail* - On August 20, the NPS, Trust for Public Land, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation announced a new conservation easement for a 194-acre property adjacent to the Appalachian Trail in Tyringham, MA. The landowners will continue to manage the property for farm, as well as forest and wildlife habitat. Funding for the project came from the National Park Foundation. Source: [The Berkshire Edge](#)
- *Badlands National Park* - On August 26, the park announced that they will release a prospectus in November for a concession opportunity providing lodging, retail, food and beverage, and camping services in the park. They will host a site visit on September 24. Source: [Badlands National Park](#)
- *Bandelier National Monument* - On August 22, the park received an easement on neighboring lands administered by the National Nuclear Security Administration to allow for the replacement of its existing waterline to the Ponderosa Campground. Source: [Los Alamos Reporter](#)
- *Biscayne National Park, Everglades National Park* - On August 27, the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida signed co-stewardship agreements with both parks. The agreements enable cooperative administration of wildland fire and prescribed burn operations, water resources, and visitors services in the Shark Valley area of Everglades, and of fisheries management, vegetation restoration, and the facilitation of traditional Tribal practices in Biscayne. Source: [Everglades National Park](#)
- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - The park is collaborating with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina State University, Duke University, East Carolina University, the North Carolina Department of Transportation, Hyde County (NC), and the Tideland Electric Membership Corporation on a multi-year study evaluating adaptation strategies related to transportation and resource management on Ocracoke Island to adapt to sea level rise and large storm events. The public is invited to participate in the effort, with a meeting scheduled on September 4. Source: [Cape Hatteras National Seashore](#)
- *Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area* - On August 27, the NPS, Cumberland (GA) Community Improvement District, and One Cumberland

announced the groundbreaking of Phase One of the New Day Palisades project, which will rehabilitate Paces Mill, located in the Palisades Unit of Chattahoochee River. The \$15.8 million project is being funded by local government, Congressional, and private funding. Phase One is expected to be complete in Spring 2025. Phase Two will begin in 2026, with completion in Spring 2027. Paces Mill will be closed throughout construction. Source: [PR Newswire](#)

- *Congaree National Park* - *The Post and Courier* published [an article](#) about the park's efforts to manage invasive feral hogs, which create dangers to public safety, local ecosystems, and archaeological sites. Source: *The Post and Courier*
- *Denali National Park and Preserve, Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, Sitka National Historical Park* - The NPS recently published [an article](#) about efforts to protect museum collections at the three parks from threats of wildfire and variable temperatures under climate change. Funding from the Inflation Reduction Act is supporting updates to emergency operations plans, as well as new systems for controlling climate in collection spaces. Source: National Park Service Office of Communications
- *Denver Service Center* (NPS' planning, design, and construction management office) - Chris Carpenter, a portfolio manager at the Denver Service Center, was selected as the NPS Engineer of the Year for his work delivering a \$500 million portfolio of infrastructure projects at Grand Canyon National Park, including the renovation of the Transcanyon Waterline. He will be honored at an awards ceremony in Washington, DC, in December. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park* - On September 3, the park began a project to install a fire suppression system in Chatham. The project is expected to last through early Spring 2025. Chatham will be closed for the remainder of the project, though the grounds will remain open from sunrise to sunset. Source: [Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - On September 16, the park will close Many Glacier Valley and the Swiftcurrent area for a major road, parking lot, and water system renovation. The closure will stay in place throughout the project, which is expected to be complete in mid-May 2026. Source: [Glacier National Park](#)
- *Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument, Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - On August 20, the Federal Aviation Administration and the NPS announced the completion of an air tour management voluntary agreement for Lake Mead, as well as "portions" of Grand Canyon-Parashant and Avi Kwa Ame National Monument (BLM-administered). Air tours will continue to be allowed with "more consistent reporting requirements" and flight altitude parameters. Source: [Lake Mead National Recreation Area](#)

- *Grand Teton National Park* - *The New York Times* published [an article](#) about the effects of climate change on the park, including retreating glaciers, historical low lake levels, high temperatures, flooding, and effects on wildlife. Source: *The New York Times*
- *Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve* - On August 24, the park began a project to remove all non-native fish from the Sand Creek drainage in order to restore native Rio Grande cutthroat trout populations. The park is collaborating with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to apply a piscicide to the creek. Sand Creek and the Sand Creek Trail are closed to the public through September 6 for this effort. Source: Great [Sand Dunes National Park](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - On September 10, Smokies Life, the park partner to Great Smoky Mountains, will release a new book, *George Masa: A Life Reimagined*, by Janet McCue and Paul Bonesteel. The biography covers the life of the Japanese immigrant who became a famed landscape photographer and conservationist in Southern Appalachia. Source: [Citizen Times](#)
- *Indiana Dunes National Park* - The *Chicago Tribune* published [an article](#) about new superintendent Jason Taylor and his priorities for improving the visitor experience at the park. Source: *Chicago Tribune*
- *Mammoth Cave National Park* - An online casino website, *JeffBet*, ranked 45 "popular U.S. tourist attractions" to determine which was the "most disappointing." It tallied low-star reviews on *Google* and *Tripadvisor*, and keywords related to disappointment. It found Mammoth Cave to be the "third most disappointing attraction in the U.S." The ranking went viral and the park responded with [its own social media post](#), which garnered over 100,000 likes and over 9,000 comments, one of its most popular posts of all time. Source: [Cincinnati Enquirer](#)
- *New River Gorge National Park and Preserve* - On August 7, the park held a dedication and ribbon-cutting for a new playground at Grandview. The playground replaces aging equipment installed when the area was previously designated as a West Virginia State Park. The \$200,000 project was funded by the BHE GT&S Foundation, National Park Foundation, and the Friends of New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. Source: [New River Gorge National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Nicodemus National Historic Site* - On August 29, the park announced that it acquired the historic First Baptist Church in Nicodemus, Kansas. The acquisition was supported by the First Nicodemus Missionary Baptist Church congregation, Trust for Public Land, and the National Park Foundation. The park plans to rehabilitate the structure over the next several years before it will open to the public. Source: [Nicodemus National Historic Site](#)

- *Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park* - On July 7, *The New York Times* published [an investigative piece](#) about the ways in which SpaceX "exploited federal agencies' competing missions" in order to establish a rocket launch site in Boca Chica, Texas, adjacent to U.S. Fish and Wildlife lands and near Palo Alto Battlefield, as well as Palmito Ranch Battlefield, a state park and National Historic Landmark. Retired superintendent Mark Spier is quoted in the article, indicating that SpaceX was intentionally misleading about potential impacts in its efforts to get approval for the project. The article documents a series of actions SpaceX has taken that has violated its agreements with local agencies. Source: *The New York Times*
- *Rock Creek Park* - The U.S. Department of Transportation recently completed an 81-page Transportation Impact Assessment about traffic and safety along Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway. The report found that the rate of crashes is "disproportionately higher" during their rush hour one-way reversible operations in the mornings and evenings. The NPS will collect public feedback "this winter" about alternative solutions, including the possibility of eliminating the reversible lane structure. Source: [WTOP](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - *Four Corners Public Radio* published [an article](#) about an artist-in-residence at the park, Garrison Gerard, who records sounds in nature and uses them in musical pieces. Source: *KSUT*
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - For the first time in park's history, a gray wolf has been confirmed in the park, some time between July 23 and August 25. Wolves were abundant in the area in the late 1800s, but the historical record shows that all were "extirpated" from the region before the park was established in 1915. Colorado Parks and Wildlife releases a wolf activity map each month, which revealed the data. Source: [Coloradoan](#)
- *Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area* - *Spectrum News 1* published [an article](#) about the park's efforts to digitize its plant collections and related data. They will be uploaded to the Consortium of California Herbaria so that the public can access the collection. The project is supported by the Southern California Research Learning Center and the Santa Monica Mountains Fund. Source: *Spectrum News 1*
- *Save America's Treasures Grants* (an NPS-administered program) - On August 20, the NPS announced the award of \$25.7 million in Save America's Treasures grants for 59 projects in 26 states and the District of Columbia. The grants are funded by the Historic Preservation Fund, which is appropriated by Congress through revenue collected from federal offshore oil and gas leases. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Semiquincentennial Grants* (an NPS-administered program) - On August 22, the NPS announced the award of \$10 million in grants for 19 projects across 9 states that restore and preserve sites on the National Register of Historic Places that

commemorate the founding of the United States. The grant program is administered through the Historic Preservation Fund, which is appropriated by Congress through revenue collected from federal offshore oil and gas leases.

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

- *Shenandoah National Park* - On August 27, the park began a two-week project to repair a section of the Dark Hollow Falls Trail that has washed out. A trail closure is in place between the Rose River Fire Road and Dark Hollow Falls. The project is expected to be complete by September 10. Source: [Shenandoah National Park](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - *National Public Radio* published [an article](#) about Yellowstone's recently-finalized bison management plan and efforts by the State of Montana to halt the plan, including threats to sue the NPS. Representatives from Montana claim the bison are a threat to cattle, while the park has stated that there are no documented transmissions of brucellosis from bison to cattle, but there are from elk, which the state has not attempted to prevent. Source: *National Public Radio*

Personnel Changes

- *Agate Fossil Beds National Monument, Scotts Bluff National Monument* - Jay Sturdevant was selected as the new superintendent of the two parks. Jay has over 25 years of NPS experience, most recently as the integrated resources division lead at Pearl Harbor National Monument and Honouliuli National Historic Site. He will begin his new role this fall. Source: [Scotts Bluff National Monument](#)
- *Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail, Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site, Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site* - Barbara Tagger was selected as the new deputy superintendent of the three parks. Barbara has over 40 years of NPS experience, most recently as the superintendent of Horseshoe Bend National Military Park. She has been serving as the acting superintendent for the three parks, and will continue to do so presently. Source: [Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail](#)

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

- Jesse T. Bazarnick, 52, passed away on August 21. Jesse worked for the NPS in Washington, DC, for a time "in his younger years." Source: [GoLocalProv](#)
- Frederick "Fred" James Hartzell, 76, passed away on August 21. Fred's father worked for the NPS, so he lived in many parks during his youth. While living in

Sequoia National Park, he worked at the Wolverton Ski Area "keeping the rope tows operating." (*Editor note: It is now the Wolverton Snowplay Area and no longer has rope tows.*) Source: [Legacy/William W. Tripp Funeral Home - Pawtucket](#)

- Roberta "Bobbie" Janette Jardine, 93, passed away on August 8. Roberta worked for the NPS for a time. Source: [Legacy](#)
- John Roy Miller (known as "Roy"), 79, passed away on June 1. Roy began working for the NPS in the mid 1970s and retired in 2003 at Lake Mead National Recreation Area. Other parks he worked at include Carlsbad Caverns National Park, and "various national parks across the Southwest." Source: [Legacy/William P Spence Funeral and Crematory Services, Inc.](#)
- Bill Pascrell, Jr., 87, passed away on August 21. Bill was a 14-term U.S. Representative in New Jersey. Bill played a pivotal role in getting Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park designated as an NPS unit. Source: [ABC7](#)
- Karen Elizabeth Sloat-Olsen, 64, passed away on August 19. She worked for the NPS for over 40 years, including as the chief of interpretation for Thomas Edison National Historical Park and Morristown National Historical Park. Source: [Legacy/Bailey Funeral Home - Mendham](#)
- Russell "Russ" Paul Smith, 75, passed away on August 21. Russ worked for the NPS for 42 years, including time at Prince William Forest Park, Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie National Historical Park, Independence National Historical Park, Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, George Washington Birthplace National Monument, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, and as the first superintendent of First State National Historical Park. Source: [Delaware Online](#)
- Vernon Cecil Smith, 91, passed away on August 18. Vernon worked for the National Park Service for many years. Source: [Fauquier Now](#)

In the News

- Gary Machlis, former science adviser to the director of NPS from 2009 to 2014 and visiting chief social scientist at the NPS from 1995 to 2002, will give a talk at Montana State University related to his book, *Sustainability for the Forgotten*. Gary is currently a professor of environmental sustainability at Clemson University. [*Editor note: A photo caption in the article conflicts with the article's text, saying that Gary is a faculty member at Auburn University; his own website and Clemson's website verify that it is Clemson, not Auburn.*] Source: [Montana State University News](#), [Gary E. Machlis Biography](#)

Open for Comment

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

- *Arches National Park* - Public comment is [open through September 17](#) on a floodplain statement of findings for proposed construction of bridges over three low-water crossings on the Delicate Arch Road. Source: [Arches National Park](#)
- *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](#)
- *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](#)
- *Buffalo National River* - Public comment is [open through September 15](#) on a draft river management plan. Source: [Buffalo National River](#)
- *Cumberland Gap National Historical Park* - Public comment is open via email or postal mail through September 4 on a proposal to increase fees on guided tours, picnic shelter rentals, and the Wilderness Road Campground. Source: [Cumberland Gap National Historical Park](#)
- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through September 9](#) on a plan to increase camping fees at Lees Ferry Campground. Source: [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#)
- *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](#)
- *Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument* - The NPS and Bureau of Land Management have [opened public comment through September 9](#) on a plan to remove several hundred wild burros currently residing "within and outside the Tassi-Gold Butte Herd Management Area." All burros would be removed, examined by a veterinarian, and made available for adoption or sale. Source: [Bureau of Land Management Arizona Strip District Office](#)
- *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](#)
- *John P. Parker House Special Resource Study* - Public comment is [open through](#)

[September 8](#) on a Congressionally-mandated special resource study of the home of abolitionist and entrepreneur John P. Parker to evaluate its potential as an NPS site.

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

- *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](#)
- *Mount Rainier National Park* - Public comment is [open through September 15](#) on the park's implementation of the 2024 timed entry reservation pilot, which took place from May 24 through September 2. Source: [Mount Rainier National Park](#)
- *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - Public comment will open on September 17 on a fire management plan. Source: [Los Amigos de Valles Caldera](#), [Valles Caldera National Preserve](#)
- *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

- *Alaska protections maintained* - In the final days of former President Donald Trump's administration, the Department of the Interior issued a Public Land Order that would have revoked protections known as "withdrawals" from 28 million acres of Bureau of Land Management lands in Alaska. The protections were established by Section 17(d)(1) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. The decision was put on hold to execute an Environmental Impact Statement process, which received 15,000 public comments. As a result, the Record of Decision will adopt and implement the preferred "No Action" alternative, keeping the protections in place. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *First offshore OR wind leases* - On August 29, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management announced the first-ever wind lease sale offshore of Oregon. The two leases will be auctioned on October 15. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$55 million for drought resilience* - On August 29, the Department of the Interior announced the availability of \$55 million in Inflation Reduction Act and annual appropriations funding for projects related to water management flexibility and reliability. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$12 million for orphaned wells on Tribal lands* - On August 30, the Department of the Interior announced the award of \$12 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding to clean up orphaned oil and gas wells on lands administered by four Tribal Nations. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

- *Op-ed about renewable energy revenue* - On September 2, the *The Boston Globe* published [an op-ed](#) by Dustin Tingley and Ana Martinez, respectively a professor and research fellow at Harvard University, arguing that the revenue generated on federal renewable energy projects should match the distribution of revenue generated on coal, oil, and gas extraction to the local communities where they are located. Source: *The Boston Globe*
- *Op-ed on land-locked public lands* - On August 20, *The Washington Post* published [an op-ed](#) by Laura Orvidas, the chief executive of onX, a map app. The op-ed states that the historic way in which public and private lands were laid out in a "checkboard" fashion has made 15.8 million acres of land inaccessible to the general public. It argues that appraisal process for access easements and federal purchases should be modernized to reflect market value and that federal funding should compensate landowners for allowing access for specific purposes such as seasonal hunting and fishing. Source: [The Washington Post](#)

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.

The House and Senate were on their August recess and only met in pro forma sessions on August 20, 23, 27, and 30.

Incidents

Incidents are listed in alphabetical order by park.

Arches National Park

Hiker fatality

On August 20, a 58-year-old became unresponsive on the Delicate Arch Trail. CPR was started by others who were present on-scene, and staff from the NPS, Grand County (UT) Sheriff's Department, Grand County EMS, and Classic Air Medical responded to the scene. Resuscitation efforts were unsuccessful and the individual was pronounced dead at the scene. The incident is under investigation by the Grand County Sheriff's Office and NPS. Source: [Arches National Park](#)

Arches National Park

Missing person

On August 23, NPS staff became aware of an abandoned rental car at the Sand Dune Arch trailhead. They were able to track the vehicle entering the park on August 16, driven

by a 76-year-old. Their family had last seen them on August 13. The park began a search on August 24, including personnel from the NPS, Grand County (UT) Search and Rescue, and a Bureau of Land Management helicopter from the Moab Interagency Fire Center. The park is looking for any information the public can provide. Source: [Arches National Park](#)

Colorado National Monument

Vehicle rollover

On August 26, a vehicle failed to navigate a curve on Rim Rock Drive and rolled down a 30-foot drop. Four individuals were in the car, and three were transferred to the hospital for treatment. Personnel from the NPS, Mesa County (CO) Sheriff's Office, Glade Park Fire Department, Grand Junction Fire Department, and Colorado State Patrol supported the incident. Source: [Colorado National Monument](#)

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area

Drowning after rescuing two children

On August 26, a 39-year-old was swimming with their family in the Delaware River near Bushkill Access when two children in the group began to struggle in the current. The adult pushed the two children to safety, then was swept up in the current themselves. The adult drowned in the incident, about 20-30 feet from the shore. Personnel from the NPS (Delaware Water Gap and Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River), Bushkill Fire Department, Dingmans Fire Department, Westfall Fire Department, and Lehman Township EMS supported the incident. They rescue team was able to recover the individual's body. It is the second drowning in the park this summer. Source: [Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, WJOL](#)

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area

Historic artifact halts work

While attempting to install a temporary bridge over Sawkill Creek, workers discovered a 12-foot-by-12-foot "slab" believed to be part of the millrace for a sluice on a nearby mill that was later made into the Metz Icehouse. The temporary bridge site has already been moved once due to concerns about historic resources. Further documentation and mitigation will be needed for the project to move forward. There is no date yet for when work will resume. A permanent bridge fix has been in the planning stage for 10 years due to the complexity of the site. The existing bridge has a "poor" rating by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, but is still said to be "safe for drivers." Source: [River Reporter](#)

Devils Tower National Monument

Hailstorm

On August 19, a thunderstorm hit the park, dropping 1.5 inches of rain and five inches of hail ranging in size from "golf ball" to "baseball," and wind gusts as high as 110 miles per

hour. Many large trees came down, including one that hit the ranger station. The park closed for two days to assess and recover from the incident. The Joyner Ridge Trail remained closed for several days longer due to "major damage," and has since reopened.

Source: [Cowboy State Daily](#)

Fire Island National Seashore

West Nile Virus

On August 14, mosquitoes were collected from a trap on Watch Hill as part of the park's collaborative effort with the Suffolk County (NY) Department of Health Services' Arthropod-Borne Disease Laboratory to monitor mosquitoes. The sample detected the first case of West Nile Virus in the park this year. On August 21, they collected mosquitoes from a trap in the Carrington Tract, which also detected West Nile Virus. As a result, the park and county will "increase surveillance" at Watch Hill and Carrington Tract, and will work closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and local municipalities to determine next steps for protecting residents, visitors, and employees. Source: Fire Island National Seashore ([8/23](#), [8/30](#))

Gateway National Recreation Area

Bacteria in water

On August 22, the NPS closed swimming at the beaches at Great Kills Park due to bacterial levels in the water exceeding local, state, and NPS standards for recreational activity. Source: [Gateway National Recreation Area](#)

Gettysburg National Military Park

Two incidents of vandalism

On August 15, park staff observed graffiti scribed into multiple boulders on Little Round Top. In a separate incident, on August 19, visitors reported that the War Department Observation Tower on Oak Ridge was spraypainted with graffiti. Park staff were able to remove evidence of both acts of vandalism by August 20. Multiple areas around the greater Gettysburg area recently have been vandalized with spray paint. The Gettysburg Borough Police Department is investigating the situation. Source: [Gettysburg National Military Park](#)

Glacier National Park

Missing climber

On August 18, a 32-year-old was hiking from Heavens Peak to McPartland Peak when they became separated from their party. They failed to arrive at the planned rendezvous spot and the rest of their party requested help that evening. A search was initiated the next morning. On August 25, the individual was located from the air by Two Bear Air. They were found deceased one-third of a mile east of McPartland Peak below the ridgeline

between Heavens Peak and McPartland Peak. The cause of death is still under investigation, though "traumatic injuries and the location of the body are indicative of a fall." Personnel from the NPS, North Valley and Flathead County (MT) Search and Rescue, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Geological Survey, Flathead County Sheriff's Department, Two Bear Air Rescue, and various members of the public supported the incident. Source: Glacier National Park ([8/21](#), [8/26](#))

Glacier National Park

Snow and ice

On August 28, the Going-to-the-Sun Road was closed between Avalanche Creek and Jackson Glacier Overlook due to dangerous road conditions caused by snow and ice. It reopened on August 29. The Hidden Lake Trail and Highline Trail from Logan Pass to Granite Park Chalet remain closed due to hazardous conditions caused by snow, slush, and ice. They will reopen once conditions improve. Source: [Glacier National Park](#)

Glacier National Park

Political candidate claim of illegal activity

On July 18, a 37-year-old candidate for the U.S. Senate in Montana made a claim during a campaign event that they parachuted into Glacier National Park as part of their U.S. Navy SEAL training. The park has stated publicly that parachuting, hang gliding, and BASE jumping are illegal in the park, with no special permissions for the military. A spokesperson for Naval Special Warfare stated that they train in Montana "but did not have any record of parachute training in the park." The candidate is the same person who had received a citation in 2015 in Glacier for discharging a weapon in the park, and while campaigning earlier this year, they said that they had lied to park rangers at the time. They stated there was no gun discharge and the bullet later found in their arm had been from an old war injury that went unreported at the time of the incident (see [4/17/24 Coalition Report](#)). Source: [Daily Montanan](#)

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area

Boating fatality

On August 25 at about 3 AM, a 41-year-old fell over 20 feet from the upper level of a privately owned houseboat in Wetherill Canyon. Personnel from the NPS, San Juan County (UT) Sheriff's Office, Classic Air Medical, and the Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation responded to the incident. Around 12:36 PM that day, the park's dive team located and recovered the individual's body. They were pronounced dead at the scene. The incident is under investigation by the NPS, San Juan County Sheriff's Office, and San Juan County Medical Examiner's Office. Source: [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#)

Golden Gate National Recreation Area

Bridge closure

On August 19, the park closed the swaying suspension bridge adjacent to the Point Bonita Lighthouse in the Marin Headlands. The bridge needs a thorough inspection. Previous inspections have revealed damage from weathering. It is unclear when the bridge will reopen. There is no access to the lighthouse until it is repaired. Source: [SFGate](#)

Golden Gate National Recreation Area

Paddleboarder rescue

On August 30, an individual was paddleboarding off Ocean Beach near the intersection of Judah and Great Highway in San Francisco, CA, when they "didn't pop up after catching a wave." The individual was located facedown and unresponsive in the water. Three nearby surfers pulled them to shore, called 911, and began CPR. San Francisco (CA) Fire Department responded, and paramedics provided advanced life support while transporting the individual to a nearby hospital. The individual was said to be in "critical condition." Source: [SFGate](#)

Grand Canyon National Park

Stage 4 water restrictions

On August 22, a new break was found in the Transcanyon Waterline, requiring water restrictions and conservation measures on the South Rim and preliminary conservation measures on the North Rim. This included the closure of camper services operated by Delaware North, and turning off spigots in Mather Campground and Desert View Campground.

On August 28, "a series of four significant breaks" were found in the Transcanyon Waterline. As a result, the park implemented "Stage 4" water restrictions, including halting all concessions overnight lodging, allowing only "dry camping" with no spigots available, and a ban on all fires on the South Rim and in the inner canyon. Source: Grand Canyon National Park ([8/22](#), [8/28](#))

Grand Canyon National Park

Flash flood

On August 22, a flash flood hit Havasu Creek. An estimated 104 local community members and visitors were stranded in the area around Havasupai Falls (located on the Havasupai Indian Reservation, adjacent to the park). Air support from the Arizona National Guard was able to evacuate "anyone requesting it" the following day, and they also deployed three supply drop-offs of food and water. The rescue was coordinated by the Coconino County (AZ) Sheriff's Office, NPS, and local Tribal officials. The campground and trail (both on the reservation) are closed indefinitely due to damage.

A 33-year-old was reported missing in the incident. They were swept into the creek about a half-mile above the Colorado River confluence. The park conducted a multi-day search. On August 25, a commercial river trip found the individual deceased near river mile 176

(located inside the park). NPS staff recovered the individual's body. They were transported to the rim by helicopter, then transferred to the Coconino County Medical Examiner. The incident is under investigation by the medical examiner and the NPS. Source: Grand Canyon National Park ([8/23](#), [8/25](#)), [Arizona Republic](#)

Grand Canyon National Park

River fatality

On August 25, a commercial river raft flipped at Fossil Rapid (river mile 126) on the Colorado River. An 80-year-old became unresponsive in the incident, and the group began CPR. The group requested assistance via a satellite phone. NPS staff were flown in by helicopter. Resuscitation efforts were unsuccessful. The NPS and Coconino County (AZ) Medical Examiner are investigating the incident. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

Grand Canyon National Park

Backpacker fatality

On August 27, an individual reported to the park that their family member, a 60-year-old, had failed to check in while backpacking solo on the Thunder River to Deer Creek loop. On August 28, an NPS search and rescue team responded via helicopter and found the individual deceased between Lower Tapeats Camp and Deer Creek Camp. The incident is under investigation by the NPS and Coconino County (AZ) Medical Examiner. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

Seismic activity

On August 21, seismic activity caused the widening of cracks on the Chain of Craters Road between Hilina Pali Road and the Maunaulu parking lot. The cracks originally formed during previous seismic activity on July 21 (see [7/24/24](#) and [8/7/24 Coalition Reports](#)). The park closed the road to vehicles from the intersection of Crater Rim Drive East to the coast to assess the damage. The road remained open to bicycles and pedestrians. On August 28, the road reopened due to diminished seismicity in the area. Source: Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park ([8/21](#), [8/28](#))

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

Tropical storm

On August 23, the park closed the coastal and Mauna Loa summit backcountry areas to day hiking and overnight camping due to the prediction of tropical storm winds. They have since reopened. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

Air tour plan petition

Vertical Aviation International, a trade group representing U.S. air tour operators, and Safari Helicopters Hawaii have filed a petition for review with a federal court of appeals for the park's air tour management plan. The plan heavily reduces the number of helicopter sightseeing flights allowed over the park, in addition to operating restrictions. The plan was finalized in December 2023. The petition argues that the plan is unsafe for pilots, blocks access for visitors with mobility issues, and is economically unfeasible for air tour companies. They argue that the Federal Aviation Administration and NPS violated the Administration Practices Act by not meaningfully evaluating aircraft safety and accessibility after they were questioned in public comments, and therefore the plan is "arbitrary and capricious." As noted in the article, the Coalition served as an intervenor for the FAA and NPS in a separate legal suit brought by Vertical Aviation International regarding the air tour plans for Badlands National Park and Mount Rushmore National Memorial. The court found that the FAA and NPS had followed procedure. Source:

[Honolulu Civil Beat](#)

Joshua Tree National Park

Bees

On August 20, the park closed the Cottonwood visitor center, parking area, restrooms, and campground due to increased bee activity. As water becomes scarce, the bees seek water sources, including condensation from air conditioners, bathrooms, and sweat on visitors. Several visitors reported getting attacked by bees in the area. The closure has since been lifted. Source: [Los Angeles Times](#), [Joshua Tree National Park Alerts and Conditions](#)

Kenai Fjords National Park

Landslide causes tsunami

On August 7 at about 5 AM, a landslide triggered a tsunami that washed over portions of Pedersen Lagoon near Aialik Bay. No one was reported injured in the incident. A private lodge reported damage to "boardwalk areas" and an NPS campsite easement had food storage box damage. Park staff are unclear whether continued landslides, rockfall, or tsunamis might occur in the area and are urging caution while visiting the area around Pederson Lagoon. Source: [Kenai Fjords National Park](#)

Moore's Creek National Battlefield

Flooding

Tropical Storm Debby caused major flooding throughout the park. Over two weeks, park staff was able to work to reopen the park, which took place on August 20. There are several trails closed to the public due to continued flooding effects, including the area below the Women's Monument, across from the boardwalk, and the Moore's Creek Bridge. *[Editor note: No closures are currently reported on the park's website, so trails may have reopened since this news item was reported on August 20.]* Source: [Port City Daily](#)

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

Missing person found in park

On August 18, a 28-year-old was reported "critically missing", an alert used by police when an individual may be "particularly vulnerable." They were listed missing by the Milwaukee (WI) Police Department, and multiple law enforcement agencies were involved in searching for the individual. An NPS law enforcement ranger saw the individual in a car in the Shauger Hill area late on August 18, but they fled before law enforcement was able to make contact. They were seen again in a wooded area off Shauger Hill Road in the park on August 20. An NPS law enforcement ranger and Benzie County (MI) Sheriff's Office K-9 deputy approached the individual and saw "what appeared to be a knife" in their hand. Both officers deployed tasers, but were unsuccessful in their efforts. An altercation between the officers and the individual ensued, and the individual was eventually restrained with support of the police canine. The individual and the two officers were transported to Munson Medical Center for treatment of "non-life-threatening injuries" sustained in the altercation. The individual was taken into custody and was expected to be booked on charges on August 21. Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive was closed for about 15 minutes during the incident and then reopened. Source: [Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore](#)

Yosemite National Park

Violent escapee

On August 21, a 40-year-old entered a restaurant in Buck Meadows, CA (outside the park), approached a pregnant staff member, touched their belly, and stated, "The spirits led me to you and your baby belongs to me." They then asked when the staff member's break was so they could wait for them. They then "stole several drinks" and assaulted a different restaurant employee. They engaged in a high speed car chase with law enforcement through Yosemite National Park along Highway 41 before crashing their car just outside the park in the town of Fish Camp. They removed their shirt, stole a bicycle, and entered the Tenaya Lodge. They brandished a knife and threatened staff. They then made their way to a nearby clubhouse, stripped to their underwear, and told customers to leave or they would face danger. They vandalized the clubhouse, and assaulted and attempted to kidnap a store manager. The manager escaped, but the suspect stole the manager's car, and began ramming it into another vehicle. They drove south, crashing outside the town of Oakhurst. They were apprehended by Mariposa County deputies. Later, while being assessed for medical issues at a local hospital, the individual assaulted law enforcement. The individual is being held on \$100,000 bail and faces charges of vandalism, vehicle theft, reckless driving, kidnapping, theft, first-degree burglary, robbery, obstructing an officer, and battery. The individual was said to have been posting "bizarre videos" to their social media before the incident, causing some to question the individual's mental health. Source: [San Francisco Chronicle](#), [Los Angeles Times](#)

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 2, the fire was 5,282 acres and 46% contained, with 75 personnel assigned. On August 13, the park closed the North Entrance to allow firefighters to prepare control lines along North Entrance Road. The road is closed from North Junction to the park boundary at the junction with Highway 138. All other park roads remain open, with the exception of construction closures on East Rim Drive. Source: [Inciweb](#), [Crater Lake National Park](#)
- *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 August 30, the fire was estimated at 16.3 acres. 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. The cause of the fire is under investigation. Source: Great Smoky Mountains National Park ([8/28](#), [8/29](#), [8/30](#))
- *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. Pedestrians and bicyclists may also go as far as Summit Lake. The highway is closed to all traffic from Summit Lake to the southwestern boundary, and outlying areas of the park also remain closed. Some trails also remain closed. As of September 2, the fire was 429,603 acres and 97% contained, with 887 personnel assigned. Source: Lassen Volcanic National Park ([7/27](#), [8/16](#)), [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. Source: [North Cascades National Park](#)
 - 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 August 28, 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 4, the park closed a number of trails due to the Flat Creek Fire, located west of Stehekin on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. As of August 29, the fire was 100% contained. Source: [North Cascades National Park](#), [Kitsap Sun](#), [Watch Duty](#)
- 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 2, the fire was 959 acres and 0% contained, with 50 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 2, the fire was 11,625 acres and 13% contained with 1,369 personnel assigned. It has expanded along the southwestern perimeter of the park onto Bureau of Land Management lands. The portion of South Fork Drive within the parks is closed. Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#), [Inciweb](#)
- *Yosemite National Park*
 - The Echo Fire is located north of Little Yosemite Valley above Echo Valley, near Merced Lake. It was discovered on August 2 and was caused by lightning. As of August 26, it was 6 acres and 0% contained.
 - The Middle Fire is located near the Middle Fork of the Tuolumne River, west of White Wolf. It was discovered on August 4 and was caused by lightning. As of August 26, it was 310 acres and 100% contained. As of August 26, trail closures were still in place on the trail along Long Gulch Creek between Aspen Valley and White Wolf.
 - The Morrison Fire is located one mile north of Morrison Creek. It was discovered on August 4 and was lightning caused. As of August 26, it was 31 acres and 75% contained.
 - Source: Yosemite National Park ([8/26](#))

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - On August 23, two individuals, ages 31 and 37, were indicted for pushing large rocks off the edge of a cliff onto the ground near the Redstone Dunes Trail on April 7, 2024 (see [4/17/24 Coalition Report](#)). The incident resulted in "damages in excess of \$1,000." Each individual was charged

with one count of injury and depredation of government property and one count of aiding and abetting. A jury trial has been scheduled for October 8. Source: [U.S. Attorney's Office: District of Nevada](#)

- *Yellowstone National Park* - On August 28, the park reopened the Madison and Gibbon Rivers for fishing due to cooler water temperatures. The Firehole River also is now open for fishing from sunrise to 2 PM, then closed during the warmer hours of the day. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

Corrections

In the 8/21/24 *Coalition Report*, we mistakenly reported that the Katahdin Woods and Water National Monument had opened Tekakapimək, the park's first visitor center. However, the visitor center was opened on 8/17 and 8/18 for "First Look" preview events, and is not yet open to the general public. It is still under construction and has not yet been donated to the National Park Service. Thanks to Bill Hafker for bringing this to our attention.

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