



The Coalition Report

Wednesday, August 6, 2025

Editor Note: Due to staff leave, the next Coalition Report will be released on August 18. The following report will follow the regular cadence, coming out on September 3.

Coalition Actions

The Coalition submitted [comments](#) on the Bureau of Land Management Montana/Dakotas State Office's 2026 First Quarter Oil and Gas Lease Sale, recommending that two parcels adjacent to Theodore Roosevelt National Park be deferred.

We submitted [comments](#) to the Environmental Protection Agency, dissenting with their proposal to approve regional haze actions in Texas and Oklahoma that would impair scenic views in national parks and wilderness areas in multiple states, as well as negatively affecting the health of local communities.

We continue to make press releases and give interviews to the media advocating for the National Park Service, including [this joint press release](#) with National Parks Conservation Association, articles in [Roll Call](#), [Oregon Public Broadcasting](#), [PBS News Hour](#), and the [Flathead Beacon](#) about the effects of funding and workforce cuts on the NPS, and [a discussion on the "Hip Hop Caucus" podcast](#) about protecting the arctic.

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.

- *More travel restrictions* - On July 23, the Department of the Interior issued a memo that mandates all international travel, travel to conferences, or official travel that would cost more than \$2,500 needs to be approved by assistant secretaries. Travel related to “consultation, is essential to protect human health, or to fulfill statutory obligations and for those in Senate-confirmed positions” is exempt from this mandate. Travel packages must be submitted 20 days before they occur for review. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Proposal to divert LWCF funds to park maintenance* - According to anonymous sources for *The Washington Post*, the Department of the Interior is drafting an order to reallocate funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund away from purchasing land and easements to maintaining existing national parks and federal lands. Source: [The Washington Post](#)
- *OPM affirms religious expression in federal workplace* - On July 28, the Office of Personnel Management issued a memo directing federal agencies “to take affirmative steps to protect religious expression in the workplace.” This includes allowing employees to display and use items related to religion in their workspace and on their person, and to engage in conversations “including attempting to persuade others of the correctness of their own religious views, provided that such efforts are not harassing in nature.” Source: [Office of Personnel Management](#)
- *Musk head travels to national parks* - A large sculpture of former lead for the Department of Government Efficiency Elon Musk’s head with the message “Make America Wait Again” has been touring national parks with long lines to enter. *Fox News* published [an interview](#) with the anonymous artist about why they made the sculpture, calling it “part protest, part performance art” aimed at drawing attention to the recent cuts to the NPS. Source: *Fox News*
- *Parody of Trump reviews of national park sites* - *The Atlantic* published [a parody piece](#) that mimics President Donald Trump’s style of speech in giving short reviews about parks, reflecting mandates given to focus on “the beauty, abundance, and grandeur of the American landscape” and omit that which “inappropriately disparages Americans past or living.” Source: *The Atlantic*

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Anacostia Park* - The NPS published an article about the history of the Anacostia Roller Skating Pavilion, the only venue of its kind in the entire National Park System. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Appalachian National Scenic Trail* - The *Associated Press* published [an article](#) about the efforts of volunteers to repair sections of the trail damaged by Hurricane Helene in September 2024. Source: *Associated Press*

- *Big Bend National Park* - The NPS is now accepting bids for construction projects that will replace the Chisos Mountains Lodge and overhaul the water system for Chisos Basin. Source: [NewsWest9](#)
- *Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area* - The park recently completed a project to plug six orphaned wells, remove wellhead equipment, and restore the affected lands. Source: [Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area](#)
- *Blackwell National Historic Site* - On July 19, the National Parks Conservation Association, Blackwell School Alliance, and Visit Marfa, published the “Blackwell Blueprint,” a plan to identify park needs and recommendations to support the park and local community. Among the recommendations is to provide “full-time NPS staff, a fair budget, and more resources.” Source: [National Parks Conservation Association](#)
- *Denali National Park and Preserve* - PennState published [an article](#) about student Olivia Dorko’s Student Conservation Association internship at the park this summer. Source: *PennState College of Health and Human Development*
- *El Malpais National Monument* - On August 11, the park will begin a project to improve the El Calderon Trail and parking area, including establishment of an ABA-accessible segment, and new seating by the Bat Cave. The project is expected to be complete in late May 2026. Source: [El Malpais National Monument](#)
- *Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park* - On August 4, the park began a project to rehabilitate the Fredericksburg Battlefield Visitor Center, including installation of a fire suppression system, and upgrades to waterlines and the electrical system. The visitor center will remain closed throughout the project. During the project, historic artifacts on exhibit will be moved and stored. The park store will remain open during the closure, and park staff will continue to be available on site to meet with visitors. Source: [Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park](#)
- *George Washington Memorial Parkway* - On July 30, the parkway announced the ongoing installation of “up to 14 new water bottle refill and drinking stations at high-traffic areas.” Installations have already occurred at the Mount Vernon Trail near Alexandria Avenue and on Theodore Roosevelt Island, and will continue through early 2026. The project is supported by Potomac Runners, DC Road Runners, American Water Charitable Foundation, Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail, the National Park Foundation, and Subaru of America. Source: [George Washington Memorial Parkway](#)
- *Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve* - The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science published [an article](#) about efforts to study the effects of changing glacial melt on harmful algal blooms in Glacier Bay. The NCCOS has a Phytoplankton Monitoring network that has supported and trained NPS staff on different monitoring techniques to collect data. The University of Alaska and Hoonah Indian Association are also partnering in the project. Source: National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science

- *Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve* - On August 4, the park announced the completion of a major housing replacement project at Bartlett Cove. The new dorm will provide housing for concession employees. The \$19 million project was funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - KJZZ published [an article](#) about the efforts to rapidly provide housing on the South Rim for employees that were displaced from the North Rim by the Dragon Bravo Fire (see “Incidents” below for more information on the fire). 13 staff from across the NPS are supporting Grand Canyon’s staff to restore 18 “previously used housing units.” 400 employees were forced to relocate. [Editor note: This presumably included concessioner employees, though the article is not specific.] Source: KJZZ
- *Great Basin National Park* - On August 4, the park announced the completion of a project to rehabilitate the water and wastewater collection systems. The \$5.5 million project was funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [Great Basin National Park](#)
- *Gulf Islands National Seashore* - On July 25, the park announced the beginning of its second phase of the Davis Bayou Bicycle and Pedestrian Path and road resurfacing project. The project, done in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration, will connect the multi-use path from Robert McGhee Road and Park Road to the William M. Comer Visitor Center. Phase one of the project was completed in September 2022. Source: [Gulf Islands National Seashore](#)
- *Ice Age National Scenic Trail* - The trail launched a new Junior Ranger activity book this summer. The book is meant to be downloaded and printed at home, with a badge that can be cut out of the back page. Source: [Ice Age National Scenic Trail](#)
- *Lake Chelan National Recreation Area* - On July 28, the park announced the selection of Guest Services, Inc., for a 10-year concession providing lodging, food and beverage, retail, campground, fuel, and other visitor services. The contract is effective on March 1, 2026. Source: [Lake Chelan National Recreation Area](#)
- *Mammoth Cave National Park* - On July 24, the park announced the discovery of a new species of prehistoric shark, *Macadens olsoni*, at the park. The name honors Rickard Olson, a retired park scientist “who played a crucial role in documenting shark fossils in the park as part of a recent Paleontological Resource Inventory.” The research included scientists from the NPS and Smithsonian. Source: [Mammoth Cave National Park](#)
- *Monocacy National Battlefield* - The park recently sent a letter to the Frederick (MD) City Council in opposition to a proposed rezoning action to allow for a 25,000-seat cricket stadium. The letter states that the stadium would sit within the original National Historic Landmark boundary of Monocacy battlefield and would disrupt the historic setting. Source: [The Frederick News-Post](#)

- *Mount Rainier National Park* - On September 1, the park will open a new online portal for Commercial Use Authorization applications. Applications for guided climbing and photography instruction will be accepted through September 30. On October 1, the portal will also receive applications for Special Use Permits in lieu of Commercial Use Authorizations. Source: [Mount Rainier National Park](#)
- *Mount Rushmore National Memorial* - *The New York Times* published [an interactive feature](#) that shows the original challenges to the carving of the presidential faces at Mount Rushmore, particularly the quality and variability of the rock. It investigates various initiatives since then to add faces to the monument and other local rock faces, including the current rhetoric discussing the possibility of adding President Donald Trump's face. The park has stated that the memorial is considered a complete artwork and that the rock is structurally unable to accommodate another face. Source: *The New York Times*
- *Muir Woods National Monument* - In late July, the NPS removed part of a wayside exhibit at the park called "History Under Construction" that attempted to provide edits and additional context to an existing wayside, such as highlighting the work of women in establishing the monument, highlighting Indigenous stewards of the land, and citing racist ideologies of otherwise-celebrated historical figures. The edited exhibit had been in place since 2021. It was removed due to President Donald Trump's Executive Order calling for removal of monuments that "inappropriately disparage Americans." Source: [The 19th](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - On August 4, the park announced that it will soon restore and reinstall the bronze statue of Albert Pike, which was toppled and vandalized during protests in June 2020. The statue has been in storage since its removal and is undergoing restoration at the Historic Preservation Training Center. It is expected to be reinstalled in October. Albert Pike was a Confederate Army general, and a leader among the religious/social group, the Freemasons, in the late 1800s. The restoration complies with Executive Orders related to beautifying Washington, DC, and "restoring truth and sanity to American history." Source: [National Mall and Memorial Parks](#)
- *New River Gorge National Park and Preserve* - On July 24, the NPS announced a Finding of No Significant Impact for the proposed demolition of historic structures in the park. Minor modifications were made to the plan after public comment, including retention of the Dun Glen Ark, the Marilyn Brown house, and the Thurmond Ice House, as well as the possible leasing of the Tom Kelly House in Thurmond and the Mini Ark and Boat Storage Rack in the Dun Glen area. Source: [New River Gorge National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial* - After this summer, the park will begin a restoration project on the memorial, including revamping the catacombs, fortifying the plaza, and improving accessibility. The project is expected to take two years, and the memorial will be closed during construction. Source: [The Beacon](#)
- *Petrified Forest National Park* - On July 7, the scientific journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* published research documenting the discovery of the oldest known

pterosaur in North America, found in Petrified Forest. The fossils were uncovered starting in 2009 by a team from the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. The new species is called *Eotephradactylus mcintireae*, meaning “ash-winged dawn goddess,” in reference to the volcanic ash the fossils were preserved in, and in honor of Suzanne McIntire, a long-time Smithsonian paleontology volunteer that completed the lab work of the specimen’s jawbone. Source: [SFGate](#)

- *Petrified Forest National Park* - In September, the park will begin a project to restore the Painted Desert Community Complex, the northern visitor center and headquarters for the park. The project is expected to take 18 months. Visitors services are being provided at the Painted Desert Inn during the project. The \$37 million project will include structural and accessibility components. It is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [KJZZ](#)
- *Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore* - *mLive* published [an article](#) about the restoration of the Head Keeper’s Quarters at the Au Sable Light Station. NPS staff are restoring it this summer utilizing traditional techniques, including the use of a plaster made of sand, lime putty, and horse hair. Source: *mLive*
- *Richmond National Battlefield Park, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On July 29, a public meeting was held about a proposed 3.2-mile New Market Heights Trail that would run from Deep Bottom Park at the James River in Varina, Virginia, to Four Mile Creek Park at New Market Road. The trail has been a collaborative effort between Henrico County, the NPS, Richmond National Battlefields Association, American Battlefields Trust, and the Capital Region Land Conservancy. The trail would highlight the efforts of Black Union soldiers to attack Confederate soldiers during the Civil War in September 1864, the first battle that Union troops won. The trail concept plan is expected to be finalized this fall, with construction taking place from 2026 to 2027. Source: [Henrico Citizen](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - The park has closed the Marmot Point area due to the creation of many unauthorized social trails and illegal driving on sensitive alpine habitat. Source: [OutThere Colorado](#)
- *Saguaro National Park* - On July 30, the park announced that it will partner with the Department of Defense’s Innovative Readiness Training Program on a variety of rehabilitation projects in the park starting in 2027, including work on a housing facility, re-engineering unpaved roads and parking areas, and demolishing obsolete properties. Source: [Saguaro National Park](#)
- *The White House and President’s Park* - The NPS published [an article](#) about the efforts of two interns through the Traditional Trades Advancement Program to learn and enact historic preservation and maintenance at the park. The program is administered in partnership with the Historic Preservation Training Center and several non-profit organizations. Source: National Park Service Office of Communications

- *Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve* - From late July to late August, the park is working on mine safety mitigation efforts at Bonanza Mine, including frequent helicopter traffic to and from the area. Source: [Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - New research published in the scientific journal *Forest Ecology and Management* indicates that baby aspens are flourishing due to the reintroduction of gray wolves in the park. It is postured that gray wolves keep elk in check, allowing plant life to better thrive. Source: [Smithsonian Magazine](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - The *Cowboy State Daily* published [an article](#) about the history and architecture of the Old Faithful Inn. Source: *Cowboy State Daily*
- *Yellowstone National Park* - The *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* published an article about efforts of University of Utah scientists to utilize artificial intelligence “deep learning models” to better catalog and predict swarms of small earthquakes in the Yellowstone region. Source: [Bozeman Daily Chronicle](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - On July 24, the park broke ground on a project to replace the El Portal Wastewater Treatment Plant that serves Yosemite Valley, El Portal, and “nearby communities.” It is the largest wastewater treatment facility in the NPS. The project will also include demolition of outdated structures and rehabilitation of the former El Portal administrative camp to house construction crews in RV sites. The project is expected to be complete in 2029. The \$239 million project is being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act, and supported by the Denver Service Center and Pacific West Region. Source: [Yosemite National Park](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - *The Conversation* published [an article](#) chronicling the long history of concessions in Yosemite, arguing that the park embodies “the long war over US national park privatization.” Source: *The Conversation*
- *Yosemite National Park* - *National Public Radio* published [an article](#) about the delays in seasonal hiring that led to many staff needing to volunteer in the park for up to six weeks in order to obtain park-provided housing while they waited to be officially onboarded. Coalition Executive Director Emily Thompson is quoted in the article. Source: *National Public Radio*
- *Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve* - Recent research demonstrates that when a caribou herd in east-central Alaska became much larger, they greatly expanded their range, lichen populations significantly declined, and deciduous shrubs that are not part of an elk’s diet increased. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)

Park People

Here we honor deceased park employees, as well as important news about Coalition Members and other

former park employees or volunteers. People are listed alphabetically by last name.

Deceased

- Bill Allen passed away on January 20. Bill worked for the NPS for 28 years at Denali National Park and Preserve. He retired from the NPS in 2011. Source: Tom Habecker
- Barbara “Barb” Gebhardt, 77, passed away on June 24. Barb was a volunteer for a time at Rocky Mountain National Park, including in the Wild Basin area. Source: [Estes Park Trail Gazette](#)
- Donna Marie Huffer, 77, passed away on July 22. Donna spent her career “as a printing specialist with the National Park Service,” including time at Grand Canyon National Park and Denali National Park and Preserve. Source: [Herald-Mail Media](#)
- Douglas “Doug” E. Palmer, 89, passed away on July 29. Doug was a “recreation specialist” at Cuyahoga Valley National Park for 25 years, retiring in 2001. Source: [Zanesville Times Recorder](#)
- Thomas “Tom” Pattaclochi, 76, passed away on July 9. Tom worked for the NPS for several years as a “preservation carpenter” at Point Reyes National Seashore. Source: [Legacy/Press Democrat](#)
- Gene Rogers, 73, passed away on February 11. Gene had a long career in federal wildland firefighting, including a stint as the fire management officer for Crater Lake National Park. Source: [Wildfire Today](#)
- Mary France Wyly, 86, passed away on July 17. Mary worked for a time for both Yosemite Park and Curry Company and the NPS in Yosemite National Park. Source: [Mariposa Gazette](#)

Retiring

- Theresa Pierno, president and CEO of the National Parks Conservation Association, will retire at the end of 2025. She has served in the role for 10 years. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- Jeff West is retiring after 42 years of working for the National Park Service, most recently as superintendent at Cape Lookout National Seashore. On July 21, the Carteret County (NC) Board of Commissioners honored Jeff with a plaque and a resolution outlining his accomplishments. Source: [Carteret County News-Times](#)

In the News

- Verna Billedeaux has retired after 30 years working as a Montana State University

extension agent on the Blackfeet Reservation, including the founding of 4-H in the region. Verna worked for the NPS for two years in Glacier National Park prior to her career at MSU. Source: [Cutbank Pioneer Press](#)

- *The Salt Lake Tribune* published [an op-ed](#) by Tom Elder against the current threats to the NPS. Tom was an interpretive ranger for one season at Dinosaur National Monument, and has lived in the adjacent community of Vernal, Utah, for many years. Source: *The Salt Lake Tribune*

Open for Comment

Items will stay on this list until public comment has closed. Listed alphabetically, except for items affecting the entire NPS, which are listed on top.

- *American Beach National Historic Landmark Study* - Public comment is [open through September 7](#) on a nomination for National Historic Landmark status for American Beach, a historic African American resort community on the Atlantic coast in northern Florida. Source: [Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve](#)
- *Clara Barton National Historic Site* - Public comment is [open through September 9](#) on a plan to rehabilitate the Clara Barton home. Source: [George Washington Memorial Parkway](#)
- *Fort Raleigh National Historic Site* - Public comment is [open through August 20](#) on a plan to stabilize one mile of shoreline for erosion control and protection of the Lost Colony Waterside Theater and historic Dough Cemetery. Source: [Fort Raleigh National Historic Site](#)
- *Ross Lake National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through August 11](#) on a frontcountry and visitor use plan for the park and the State Route 20 corridor. Source: [North Cascades National Park](#)
- *Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve* - Public comment is [open through August 8](#) on the proposed relocation of the Fort Caroline Memorial out of the floodplain and away from the St. Johns River. Source: [Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve](#)
- *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - Public comment is [open through August 31](#) on a general management plan/ Valles Grande District development concept plan. Source: [Valles Caldera National Preserve](#)

Other Department of the Interior News

- *New appointee at Interior* - Kevin Lilly, a wealth manager and Army veteran, was appointed as the new acting assistant secretary for fish wildlife and parks for the Department of the Interior. Source: [SFGate](#)

- *Border land transferred to Navy* - On July 23, the Department of the Interior announced it is transferring 285 acres of public land in Yuma County, Arizona, to the Department of the Navy for three years to establish a National Defense Area in support of border security operations. The parcel is said to be a “region that has seen persistent illegal cross-border activity.” The land transfer is authorized under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *“Energy generation optimization”* - On August 1, Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum signed a Secretary’s Order to consider proposed energy project’s capacity density when assessing energy benefits. In the press release, the Department of the Interior stated, “Massive, unreliable energy projects, such as wind and solar, are inefficient uses of federal lands when compared to other energy sources with much smaller footprints, like nuclear, gas, and coal.” Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Ending “special treatment” for wind* - On July 29, the Department of the Interior announced it is ending “preferential treatment for unreliable energy sources like wind,” will consider whether to withdraw onshore wind energy development if it conflicts with recreation and grazing, is dissolving designated offshore Wind Energy Areas for leasing, will increase stakeholder engagement about offshore wind development, and will conduct a “careful review” of avian mortality rates associated with wind projects. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Removal of restrictions on National Petroleum Reserve* - On July 28, the Department of the Interior announced that it is rescinding three policy documents that put restrictions on management within the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Capture of minerals in mine waste* - On July 24, the Department of the Interior announced a Secretary’s Order to streamline federal regulation to allow for the recovery of “critical minerals” from mine waste, as well as prioritizing a review of plans to recover uranium and other minerals from abandoned mines. Recent research by the U.S. Geological Survey suggests there are promising sources of minerals such as zinc, germanium, tellurium, and rare earth elements in legacy and ongoing mining operations. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Montana coal mine expansion* - On August 5, the Department of the Interior announced the approval of a mining plan modification for the Rosebud Mine in Rosebud and Treasure Counties in Montana, allowing for much more extraction and an extension on operations through 2039. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$103 million for wetlands* - On August 4, the Department of the Interior announced \$102.9 million in North American Wetlands Conservation Act funding to enhance 548,242 acres of “wetland and associated upland habitat for migratory birds across North America.” Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

Congressional Actions

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

New Public Laws

Nothing to report this period.

Senate Actions

July 24 -

The Committee on Appropriations ordered favorably reported the original bill (S. 2431) entitled, "Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2026."

The Senate reported S. 2431, making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, environment, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026. The highlights of S. 2431, which address the National Park Service, are as follows:

- Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) - "For expenses necessary for the management, operation, protection, and maintenance of areas and facilities administered by the National Park Service and for the general administration of the National Park Service, \$2,869,424,000, of which \$110,980,000 for maintenance, repair, or rehabilitation projects for constructed assets, \$188,184,000 for cyclic maintenance projects for constructed assets and cultural resources, and \$15,000,000 for uses authorized by section 101122 of title 54, United States Code shall remain available until September 30, 2027, of which not to exceed \$15,000 may be for official reception and representation expenses."
- National Recreation and Preservation - "For expenses necessary to carry out recreation programs, natural programs, cultural programs, heritage partnership programs, environmental compliance and review, international park affairs, and grant administration, not otherwise provided for, \$91,596,000, to remain available until September 30, 2027."
- Historic Preservation Fund - "For expenses necessary in carrying out the National Historic Preservation Act (division A of subtitle III of title 54, United States Code), \$168,246,000, to be derived from the Historic Preservation Fund and to remain available until September 30, 2027,...of which, of the amounts made available for Competitive grants: (1) \$1,250,000 shall be for the survey and nomination of properties to the National Register of Historic Places and as National Historic Landmarks associated with communities currently under-represented, as determined by the Secretary; (2) \$24,000,000 shall be to preserve the sites and stories of the African American Civil Rights movement; and (3) \$5,000,000 shall be to preserve sites related to the struggle of all people to achieve equal rights in America, and of which the amounts made available for Historic Preservation Fund Projects are for the projects specified for such purpose in the table titled "Congressionally Directed Spending Items" in the report accompanying this Act."

- Construction - “For construction, improvements, repair, or replacement of physical facilities, and related equipment, and compliance and planning for programs and areas administered by the National Park Service, \$140,791,000, to remain available until expended, of which \$3,190,000 is for projects specified for Line item construction and maintenance in the table titled “Congressionally Directed Spending Items” in the report accompanying this Act:...”
- Centennial Challenge - “For expenses necessary to carry out the provisions of section 101701 of title 54, United States Code, relating to challenge cost share agreements, \$12,000,000, to remain available until expended, for Centennial Challenge projects and programs, which shall be derived from unobligated balances from prior year appropriations available under this heading: Provided, That not less than 50 percent of the total cost of each project or program shall be derived from non-Federal sources in the form of donated cash, assets, or a pledge of donation guaranteed by an irrevocable letter of credit.”
- Administrative Provisions - “In addition to other uses set forth in section 101917(c)(2) of title 54, United States Code, franchise fees credited to a sub-account shall be available for expenditure by the Secretary, without further appropriation, for use at any unit within the National Park System to extinguish or reduce liability for Possessory Interest or leasehold surrender interest. Such funds may only be used for this purpose to the extent that the benefitting unit anticipated franchise fee receipts over the term of the contract at that unit exceed the amount of funds used to extinguish or reduce liability. Franchise fees at the benefitting unit shall be credited to the sub-account of the originating unit over a period not to exceed the term of a single contract at the benefitting unit, in the amount of funds so expended to extinguish or reduce liability.

“For the costs of administration of the Land and Water Conservation Fund grants authorized by section 105(a)(2)(B) of the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 (Public Law 109–432), the National Park Service may retain up to 3 percent of the amounts which are authorized to be disbursed under such section, such retained amounts to remain available until expended.

“National Park Service funds may be transferred to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Department of Transportation, for purposes authorized under 23 U.S.C. 203. Transfers may include a reasonable amount for FHWA administrative support costs.

“Funding appropriated under the heading “Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Construction” in Public Law 118–158 shall be allocated and expended for each project and in the amounts specified in the report submitted to the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate on February 13, 2025 entitled “American Relief Act (Public Law 118–158) Execution Status as of February 13, 2025.

“The National Park Service shall maintain staffing levels by hiring, retaining, and rehiring

after separations in order to fulfill the mission required under title 16, title 43, and title 54, United States Code, including to protect natural and cultural resources, provide and maintain appropriate access and recreation for visitors, provide safety precautions for visitors and staff, maintain physical and natural infrastructure, provide information and respond to stakeholders and the general public, conduct tribal consultation, provide for administrative support, administer historic and other preservation programs, and carry out other activities in support of effectively operating the National Park System and carrying out programs administered by the National Park Service in a timely manner.”

House of Representative Actions

July 22 - The Committee on Appropriations held a markup on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies FY2026 Appropriations Bill. It was ordered reported, as amended. Within the bill, the committee noted concerns with the proposal to reorganize wildland firefighting duties from the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture into a single agency, and ordered the Government Accountability Office to study the concept and report back within six months of the bill’s passage.

July 23 - The Committee on Natural Resources held a markup on a number of bills, including H.R. 2290, the “World War II Women’s Memorial Location Act” and H.R. 4285, the “STARS Act,” which would designate September 17, 2026 as a fee-free day for NPS sites in honor of the semiquincentennial anniversary of the United States. H.R. 2290 and H.R. 4285 were ordered reported, as amended.

July 24 - The House filed a report on H.R. 4754; making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026, and for other purposes. The highlights of H.R. 4754 which address the National Park Service are as follows. *[Editor note: Language is similar, but amounts vary between the House and Senate. Additionally, Senate version above includes directives on NPS hiring that are not included in the House version.]*

- Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) - “For expenses necessary for the management, operation, and maintenance of areas and facilities administered by the National Park Service and for the general administration of the National Park Service, \$2,718,124,000, of which \$11,661,000 for planning and interagency coordination in support of Everglades restoration and \$15,000,000 for uses authorized by section 101122 of title 54, United States Code shall remain available until September 30, 2027.”
- National Recreation and Preservation - “For expenses necessary to carry out recreation programs, natural programs, cultural programs, heritage partnership programs, environmental compliance and review, international park affairs, and grant administration, not otherwise provided for, \$89,593,000, to remain available until September 30, 2027.”
- Historic Preservation Fund - “For expenses necessary in carrying out the National Historic Preservation Act (division A of subtitle III of title 54, United States Code), \$168,900,000, to be derived from the Historic Preservation Fund and to remain available until September 30,

2027, of which \$25,500,000 shall be for Save America's Treasures grants... Provided further, that of the funds provided for the Historic Preservation Fund, \$30,250,000 is for the Competitive Grants Sub-activity; \$11,000,000 is for grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities; \$10,000,000 is for competitive grants for the restoration of historic properties of national, State, and local significance listed on or eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places,...; \$7,000,000 is for a competitive grant program to honor the semiquincentennial anniversary of the United States by restoring and preserving sites and structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places that commemorate the founding of the nation.”

- Construction - “For construction, improvements, repair, or replacement of physical facilities, and related equipment, and compliance and planning for programs and areas administered by the National Park Service, \$135,616,000, to remain available until expended.”
- Centennial Challenge - “For expenses necessary to carry out the provisions of section 101701 of title 54, United States Code, relating to challenge cost share agreements, \$12,000,000, to remain available until expended, for Centennial Challenge projects and programs: Provided, that not less than 50 percent of the total cost of each project or program shall be derived from non-federal sources in the form of donated cash, assets, or a pledge of donation guaranteed by an irrevocable letter of credit.”
- Administrative Provisions - “In addition to other uses set forth in section 101917(c)(2) of title 54, United States Code, franchise fees credited to a sub-account shall be available for expenditure by the Secretary, without further appropriation, for use at any unit within the National Park System to extinguish or reduce liability for possessory Interest or leasehold surrender interest. Such funds may only be used for this purpose to the extent that the benefitting unit anticipated franchise fee receipts over the term of the contract at that unit exceed the amount of funds used to extinguish or reduce liability. Franchise fees at the benefitting unit shall be credited to the sub-account of the originating unit over a period not to exceed the term of a single contract at the benefitting unit, in the amount of funds so expended to extinguish or reduce liability.

“For the costs of administration of the Land and Water Conservation Fund grants authorized by section 105(a)(2)(B) of Public Law 109–432 (43 U.S.C. 1331 note), the National Park Service may retain up to 3 percent of the amounts which are authorized to be disbursed under such section, such retained amounts to remain available until expended.

“National Park Service funds may be transferred to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Department of Transportation, for purposes authorized under 23 U.S.C. 203. Transfers may include a reasonable amount for FHWA administrative support costs.”

Incidents

Listed alphabetically by park/program.

Assateague Island National Seashore

Swimmer fatality

On July 24, two swimmers began to struggle in the ocean “well offshore” near the southern end of the Chincoteague Beach parking lot. A family member ran down the beach and alerted lifeguards. One was successfully rescued, while the other, an 18-year-old, was pulled from the water unconscious. CPR was immediately implemented. They were transported via ambulance to a local hospital, and declared deceased upon arrival. Personnel from the NPS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, the State of Virginia, and contracted lifeguards were involved in the incident. Source: [Assateague Island National Seashore](#)

Big Cypress National Preserve, Everglades National Park

Lawsuit against “Alligator Alcatraz”

On June 27, the Friends of the Everglades and the Center for Biological Diversity issued a 60-day notice of intent to sue federal and Florida state agencies over the failure to consider environmental impacts of the immigrant detention center located on a private inholding surrounded by Big Cypress. On July 11, the groups filed a Notice of Violations of Federal Environmental Law, detailing changes and problems already occurring and issuing a legal warning to stop development and operations. Source: [The Wildlife Society](#)

Death Valley National Park

Russian earthquake affects pupfish habitat

On July 29, an 8.8-magnitude earthquake struck Russia’s Kamchatka Peninsula, triggering 10-inch waves 4,000 miles away in Devils Hole in Death Valley. The waves removed “some materials from the shallow shelf,” but biologists stated that this quake was not as impactful as other earthquakes because of the size of the waves, as well as favorable conditions for algae regrowth. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area

Low water

On July 23, the park announced that seasonal water level changes are predicted by the Bureau of Reclamation to affect all boat launch ramps. Halls Crossing Launch Ramp may be inoperable as soon as early August. Water levels are 29 feet lower than this time last year.

Grand Canyon National Park

Missing person

On July 22, a 35-year-old went hiking in the Grandview Trail and Horseshoe Mesa area. On July 28, they were reported missing by family and friends. Their vehicle was found later that day at the Grandview Point parking lot. The park is looking for any information the public may have about

the individual. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

Grand Canyon National Park

Pipeline break

On August 5, a section of the transcanyon water pipeline broke north of Phantom Ranch. As a result, the park has implemented water conservation measures on the South Rim. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Heavy storm, landslide

On August 1, heavy rainfall hit the area, resulting in a landslide on Newfound Gap Road between mile marker 12 and 13 on the Tennessee side of the park, south of Alum Cave trailhead. Furthermore, heavy rainfall caused Walker Camp Prong to swell, undermining the roadway. The NPS and Federal Highway Administration are assessing the structural integrity of the road, and Newfound Gap Road/US 441 is currently closed. The park plans to reopen a section of roadway on the North Carolina side from Oconaluftee to Newfound Gap the week of August 4. Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Hiker rescue

On July 25, a child (age undisclosed) was reported to have a “suspected head injury” while hiking on the Rainbow Falls Trail. A National Guard helicopter from Joint Base McGhee Tyson lowered a medic to the scene, then extracted the individual, and flew them to the University of Tennessee Medical Center for treatment. Source: [WBIR](#), [Knox News](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Road rage

On July 31, an individual was driving southbound through Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, and began to pass another vehicle. The second vehicle began to match their speed and stopped them from passing. When the two cars eventually stopped at a traffic light, the driver of the second vehicle, a 20-year-old, shook their finger “to indicate ‘no.’” Later, at another traffic light, the driver of the first car “flipped the bird” at the driver of the second car. When the light turned green, the driver of the first car attempted to pass again, but the second car blocked them in. They eventually reached the Spur in the park, where the first car tried “running [them] off the road in an attempt to get away.” The second car then pulled up next to them, brandished a pistol out the driver-side window, and fired one shot into the side of the first car. The second car then merged onto the Gatlinburg Bypass and the driver of the first car called for help. Law enforcement tracked the second car to a hotel room in Pigeon Forge that evening. The driver claimed they had not fired their gun since the previous day, but one of the two passengers was able to confirm that one shot had been fired. That passenger, a 21-year-old, was on probation for a previous assault and, by their parole conditions, should not have been in possession of a firearm. The second

passenger, a 28-year-old, had rented the hotel room where the individuals were found. All three individuals were arrested and charged in a federal criminal complaint. Source: [SBIR](#)

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

Road closure due to fire danger

On July 30, the park closed Mauna Loa Road past Kīpukapuaulu and Hilina Pali Road past the Maunaiki Trailhead due to elevated fire danger from “persistently dry weather.” Pedestrians, non-motorized bicycles, and backcountry hikers with permits are still provided access. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)

Independence National Historical Park

Protests against exhibit removal

On August 2, over 100 people gathered near the Liberty Bell to protest the impending removal of a slavery-focused exhibits at the park. According to federal documents obtained by two media outlets, the NPS has identified 13 exhibits at the park to remove, including wayside exhibits with the titles, “Life Under Slavery” and “The Dirty Business of Slavery.” Source: [WHYY](#)

Kenai Fjords National Park

Cliff rescue

On July 21, two individuals became stranded on a cliff face beyond a closure sign marked “Exit Creek Prohibited Visitor Use Zone.” NPS personnel responded to the location and made contact with the two individuals. One was unharmed and able to be hiked out. The other had sustained injuries from a fall and was inaccessible to the staff. They requested an Air National Guard helicopter, which extracted the individual and transported them to Anchorage for further medical treatment. Alaska State Troopers also supported the incident. Source: [Kenai Fjords National Park](#)

Lake Mead National Recreation Area

Stranded person rescued

On July 27, a 42-year-old individual and their family visited Lake Mead to celebrate a birthday. When the family was ready to leave, they could not find the individual, “so they left a few supplies behind...and went home” The individual did not return by the next day, and the family reported them missing. A search ensued for two days. On July 29, some people fishing at the lake heard someone yelling for help, and they alerted authorities. A team located the voice on a “steep hill” to the west of Kingman Wash, but could not see the individual until they got close to them. The individual had no shirt, shoes, food, or water when they were located. The rescuers gave the individual water and electrolytes, helped them down the hill to the shoreline, then took them by boat to be treated by emergency medical personnel. Source: [12 News](#)

Lewis and Clark National Historical Trail

Fatality

On July 28, a 41-year-old was swimming at Youngs River Falls, when they were seen going underwater and not resurfacing. Personnel from Clatsop County (OR) Sheriff's Office, Olney-Walluski Fire and Rescue District, and Astoria Fire Department responded to the scene, but could not locate the individual. The Clatsop County Underwater Recovery Team located the individual two hours after they had been seen going underwater. Source: [The Astorian](#) [Editor note: Youngs River Falls is [a site on the Lewis and Clark National Historical Trail](#), but is not managed by the NPS. It is managed by Astoria (OR) Parks and Recreation.]

Olympic National Park

Oil spill

On July 18, an oil tanker truck crashed into Indian Creek, outside the park, spilling an estimated 3,000 gallons of diesel fuel and gasoline into the water. A multi-agency response team has been working to clean and contain the spill, and hundreds of dead fish have been observed and recovered. The creek is a tributary to the Elwha River, and the spill may have yet-unknown impacts on the salmon runs on the river, which runs through the park. Due to staffing cuts, there are no permanent fisheries staff left at the park to assess damage or guide recovery efforts.

Source: [SFGate](#)

Point Reyes National Seashore

Hikers trapped by tides

On August 2, two hikers, both 18-years-old, were on the beach near Elephant Rock when rising tides blocked their exit route. They called 911 when they realized they were trapped. Personnel from Sonoma County (CA) Sheriff and Marin County Fire Department supported the incident via a helicopter hoist. Source: [SFGate](#)

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

Heart attack rescue

On July 11, an individual had a heart attack at the fish weir on the Platte River. Family members began CPR. Park staff arrived on scene "within three minutes" and took over CPR and used an AED. Personnel from Benzie County (MI) EMS and Frankfort Fire and Rescue also responded. After about 10 minutes the individual's pulse returned and they started breathing on their own. They were taken to Munson Medical Center in Traverse City, and they were said to have made a full recovery. Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes was credited with purchasing the AEDs and medical supplies, as well as funding emergency medical training for park staff. Source: [mLive](#)

Yellowstone National Park

Thermal burns

On July 28, a 17-year-old was hiking near Lone Star Geyser when their foot broke through the thin crust and the individual received burns on their lower leg. Emergency medical staff responded and transported the individual to a local hospital for treatment. The incident is under investigation. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

Yosemite National Park

Branches kill hiker

On July 19, a 29-year-old was hiking at the Tuolumne Grove of giant sequoias when they were struck in the head by a large branch. They became unresponsive with “blood pooling around [their] head.” Another person in their party called 911 and performed CPR until an NPS staff member arrived and took over CPR. Resuscitation efforts were unsuccessful. An autopsy later revealed the mechanism of death was blunt trauma to the head. Source: [The New York Times](#)

Wildfires

- *Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Curecanti National Recreation Area* - On July 10, lightning strikes ignited wildfires on both the North Rim and South Rim of Black Canyon of the Gunnison. All visitors and staff were evacuated from the park. As of August 5, the South Rim Fire was 4,232 acres and 52% contained, with 24 personnel assigned. On July 18, Curecanti closed all boating activities on the Blue Mesa Reservoir, west of Middle Bridge, due to firefighting scooper aircraft. On July 20, the reservoir was reopened. On July 24, the park announced that a team of hydrologists and soil scientists began conducting rapid assessments, and have thus far noted that drinking water supplies have not been affected. On July 30, the North Rim of Black Canyon of the Gunnison reopened to the public. Source: Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park ([7/10](#), [7/24](#), [7/25](#)), [Inciweb](#), Curecanti National Recreation Area ([7/18](#), [7/20](#))
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - On July 4, lightning struck south of an area known as the Basin near the W1 Road, causing the Dragon Bravo Fire. It was originally allowed to burn, with fire crews monitoring its progress. It grew slowly to 120 acres after seven days. On July 11, winds shifted and increased dramatically, headed toward the North Rim facilities. All facilities were evacuated. On July 12, the fire jumped several fire containment lines, and personnel detected a potential chlorine gas leak from the water treatment facility, requiring the evacuation of firefighters, grounding of aircraft, and evacuation of the North Kaibab Trail, South Kaibab Trail, and Phantom Ranch area. Early on July 13, the fire burned over the developed area of the North Rim, destroying or damaging 235 structures, including the historic Grand Canyon Lodge and an NPS visitor center. As of August 5, the fire was 126,445 acres and 13% contained, with 1,202 personnel assigned. Source: *Watch Duty* (app), [AZ Central](#), [Inciweb](#)
- *Grand Teton National Park* - On July 26, a lightning-caused fire was reported near Signal Mountain. Personnel employed a suppression strategy, and the Signal Flat Fire was 100% contained at 7.8 acres on July 27. Signal Mountain Road remained closed throughout the incident for fire operations. Source: [Grand Teton National Park](#)
- *Kobuk Valley National Park* - On July 6, “nearly 1,600 lightning strikes” took place in the Galena Zone. Several fires were started:
 - Jade Fire, located 17 miles northwest of Ambler and 1.5 miles north of the Kobuk

River at river mile 61: As of July 12, the fire was 100% contained.

- Karet Fire, south of the Kobuk River adjacent to the Jade Fire: As of July 12, the fire was 100% contained at 8 acres.
 - Hunt, Kaliguricheark, and Kobuk Fires, burning close to one another in Kobuk Valley National Park 7 miles north of the Kobuk River at river mile 37 and 1.5 miles east of the Kaliguricheark River at river mile 11. As of August 2, the three fires were estimated to be 11,624 acres.
 - Source: [Kobuk Valley National Park](#), [Alaska Wildland Fire Information](#)
- *Olympic National Park* - On July 6, a human-caused fire began on the Olympic National Forest near the Mt. Rose Trailhead, southeast of the Staircase area of the park. As of August 5, the Bear Gulch Fire was 4,936 acres and 3% contained, with 511 personnel assigned. On July 30, the Staircase Campground and “areas across the causeway on the north side of Lake Cushman” were evacuated. As of August 2, the Cushman Ridge Area was listed at Level 2 evacuation status (“be set” to evacuate). Source: Olympic National Park (7/7, 7/8), Watch Duty (app), [Inciweb](#), [Mason County \(WA\) Sheriff's Office Facebook page](#), [Olympic National Park Facebook page](#)
 - *Rocky Mountain National Park* - On July 23, a “potential lightning strike fire” was observed in the Lawn Lake area on the east side of the park. Park staff investigated on July 24, finding a single smoldering tree. The Roaring River Fire was contained at 0.01 acres. Source: [Rocky Mountain National Park](#)
 - *Yellowstone National Park* - On July 30, Yellowstone helitack crews detected the Ash Fire in the Bechler area in the southwest corner of the park. The park immediately took action to suppress the fire, and it was stopped at about 10 acres. Some closures to trails and backcountry campsites were enacted. The fire is believed to have been ignited by lightning. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - On August 4, the NPS opened the parkway between Milepost 280.9 and 285.5, near Bamboo Gap. It has been closed since Hurricane Helene hit the region in September 2024. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)
- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - On August 2, the park closed 0.3 miles of shoreline from the southern boundary of Buxton Village (NC) to the southernmost jetty at Old Lighthouse Beach due to the presence of petroleum odors and light sheens. This is the same section of beach closed from September 2023 to June 12, 2025 (see [9/6/23](#), [3/6/24](#), [4/3/24](#), [5/15/24](#), [9/18/24](#), and [12/26/24 Coalition Reports](#)). Strong surf over the previous 24 hours at the beach eroded substantial sand and exposed contaminated soils. The Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District, and the Coast Guard's National Response Center have been notified, and remediation of the former defense site is ongoing. Source: [Cape Hatteras National Seashore](#)

- *Death Valley National Park* - The individual whose car was found in a remote area just outside the park in February (see [6/11/25 Coalition Report](#)), triggering a search in and around the park, was found alive in Colorado on July 22. No further information was given about the individual. Source: [CBS News](#)
- *Grand Teton National Park* - The House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Federal Government Surveillance sent a letter to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Wyoming calling the prosecution of a trail runner for cutting switchbacks (see [10/30/24](#) and [5/28/25 Coalition Reports](#)) "overcriminalization." It criticizes the choice to pursue a bench trial, necessitating the need for "significant prosecutorial resources.," and asks the office to provide documentation that shows the case complies with President Donald Trump's Executive Order on overcriminalization. As of August 5, no ruling had yet been made on the case. Source: [SFGate](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - On July 28, the Latimer County (CO) Coroner's Office confirmed that the skeletal remains found near Alpine Ridge Trail on June 18 (see [6/25/25 Coalition Report](#)) have been identified as a 40-year-old from New York. "Foul play has been ruled out," and the individual is believed to have passed away in late November 2024. "Due to the remains being mostly skeletonized at the time they were found, a cause and manner of death is unable to be determined." No other details about the individual's disappearance were released. Source: [People](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced the cause of death for a grey wolf in the park (see [4/30/25 Coalition Report](#)). It passed away due to injuries from a mountain lion attack. Source: [KRDO](#)
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - On July 24, the 26-year-old who went missing in May after attempting to rescue their sibling in the Kaweah River (see [6/11/25 Coalition Report](#)) was located by the Tulare County (CA) Sheriff's Office Swiftwater Diver Rescue Team, in coordination with the NPS. The individual's location was identified as a "point of high interest" by a certified water K9 team from the California Office of Emergency Services in early July, but water conditions prevented discovery until July 24. Source: [Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks](#)

Corrections

In the 6/23/25 edition of the *Coalition Report*, we mistakenly had a typo in the Horace M. Albright Training Center. Thanks to Ann Baugh for bringing it to our attention.

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- Editor: Katie Wallace
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- Regular Correspondent: Chris Soller
- Issue Contributors: Ann Baugh, Tom Habecker, Bill Walters

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

The Coalition to Protect America's National Parks 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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