



The Coalition Report

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

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Coalition Actions

The Coalition published [a statement](#) about the increase in NPS fees for international visitors, arguing that it will create an extra burden for employees and negatively affect gateway communities.

The Coalition submitted [a letter](#) to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee in opposition to the proposed bill S. 2970, which would authorize the use of off-road vehicles in Capitol Reef National Park.

We submitted [comments](#) to the Environmental Protection Agency urging the agency to not water down the Clean Air Act and to continue to enforce regional haze state plan requirements. We also joined 35 other conservation groups in joint [comments](#). Furthermore, the Sierra Club submitted [extensive legal and technical comments](#) to the EPA on behalf of 12 organizations, including the Coalition.

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.

- *DEI audit required of NPS bookstores* - On November 25, the Department of the Interior sent [a memo](#) ordering NPS staff to conduct a review of all retail items in park bookstores and gift shops to remove items related to ‘illegal and immoral discrimination’ programs, including DEI, DEIA, and EJ (collectively, ‘equity-related’) mandates, policies, preferences, and activities.” Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Private land inholdings report* - On December 4, the Trust for Public Land released a report urging Congress to preserve Land and Water Conservation Fund monies for buying private property inholdings inside units of the National Park System. The Trump Administration has proposed shifting those funds to the maintenance backlog. Source: [E&E News](#)
- *Fee free days changed and expanded* - The NPS announced the fee free days for 2026, which will exclude Juneteenth, the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., the first day of National Park Week, the Bureau of Land Management’s birthday, Great American Outdoors Day, National Public Lands Day, and the first Sunday of National Wildlife Refuge Week. In 2026, fee free days will include President’s Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day (which is also President Donald Trump’s birthday), a three-day window of July 4, the NPS’ birthday, Constitution Day, and the birthday of President Theodore Roosevelt. Veterans Day will remain a fee free day. Source: [Gettysburg Connection](#)
- *New park pass designs* - As part of its rolling out a new fee schedule for 2026 public lands passes, the new America the Beautiful pass designs were released, including several that feature the visage of President Donald Trump. The legal language of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act includes a provision requiring the pass design be designated through a competition open to the public, though it remains to be seen if any entities would be willing to challenge the design in court. Source: [SFGate](#)

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Acadia National Park* - A new study published in the *Journal of Applied Ecology* highlighted the success of Acadia’s team in controlling invasive plants over the last 30 years. It credits the success to both environmental and management factors, such as effective inventories. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Arches National Park, Zion National Park* - On December 1, a delegation from the Department of the Interior met with Utah state and local leaders, as well as NPS personnel, in a closed-door session to discuss future management and planning at Utah national parks. Topics included timed entry programs, parking issues, and supporting local economies. Some groups criticized the closed nature of the session, which barred the media and was just below the state quota threshold of requiring public attendance. Source: [Utah News Dispatch](#)

- *Badlands National Park, Denali National Park and Preserve* - A new study utilizing visitor surveys at both parks assessed “stewardship attitudes” towards paleontology resources, including the effectiveness of various types of outreach and general public understanding. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Everglades National Park* - On December 12, the park will host a ribbon cutting for the new Marjory Stoneman Douglas Visitor Center. It replaces the former Gulf Coast Visitor Center, which was destroyed by Hurricane Irma in 2017. It meets LEED Silver standards, and is engineered to withstand hurricane-force winds and storm surges. It is named after Marjory Stoneman Douglass, who was pivotal in protecting the Everglades and the establishment of the park. Source: [Everglades National Park](#)
- *Great Basin National Park* - On December 1, the NPS announced a solicitation for proposals for a 10-year concession contract providing food and beverage, retail, and other services at the Lehman Caves Visitor Center. Proposals are due by March 25. Source: [Great Basin National Park](#)
- *Great Basin National Park* - The NPS published [an article](#) written by seasonal interpretive ranger Tommy Medford, describing the efforts of park staff to replace the aging lighting system in Lehman Caves. Source: *The Midden - Great Basin National Park*, Vol. 25, No. 2, Winter 2025
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - On December 1, the NPS announced a solicitation for proposals for a 10-year contract providing guided horseback riding, horse boarding, and horse camp services at Five Brooks Stables and Horse Camp. Proposals are due by February 26. Source: [Point Reyes National Seashore](#)
- *U.S. Park Police* - On December 8, a group of Senators sent a letter to Interior Secretary Doug Burgum urging it to halt its efforts to double the size of the U.S. Park Police after a memo was obtained stating a goal to “establish the U.S. Park Police as the premier law enforcement agency in DC, capable of keeping DC safe regardless of inaction by MPD [Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia] or inaction by the DC City Council.” Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Wright Brothers National Memorial* - On December 17, the 122nd anniversary of the first flight by Wilbur and Orville Wright, First Flight High School will showcase the school’s first completed student-built airplane. The project is a culmination of a two-year hands-on learning experience for the students, including aeronautics, engineering, leadership, and teamwork skills. Source: [Wright Brothers National Memorial](#)

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

- David Harold Gooch, 88, passed away on December 4. David helped pave “some of the first roads in Yellowstone National Park.” Source: [Legacy/Hawker Funeral Home - Blackfoot](#)
- Charles “Chuck” C. Haslet, Jr., 87, passed away on November 25. Chuck worked at the federal government for 41 years, including time as the real estate chief appraiser for the NPS, in which “he was involved in the greatest expansion of the National Park System in the late 1970s and 1980s.” Source: [Legacy/Hall Funeral Home - Purcellville](#)
- William “Bill” Kinjorski, 63, passed away on November 26. Bill worked as an interpretive ranger at Isle Royale National Park for a time in the late 1990s. Source: [Legacy/Fausett Family Funeral Homes - Manistique](#)
- Fred K. Paulsen, 73, passed away on November 5. Fred worked for the NPS for 35 years, at Yellowstone National Park, working as a carpenter, manager of historic preservation, and a project manager. Source: [Legacy/The Salt Lake Tribune](#)
- Everett Milton Phister, 93, passed away on December 4. Everett worked for the NPS for many years, including time at Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area and Zion National Park. Source: [St. George News](#)
- Since the last *Coalition Report*, readers have helped provide additional context for two individuals who recently passed:
 - Gary Cummins, who passed away on November 14, served at many NPS sites, including as superintendent at Pearl Harbor National Memorial (then USS Arizona Memorial), superintendent at Cabrillo National Monument, superintendent at Petrified Forest National Park, assistant superintendent at Grand Canyon National Park, and director of the Harpers Ferry Center. Source: Costa Dillon
 - John Rinker, who passed away on November 7, worked in maintenance for at Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area for many years. Source: Chris Nelson

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.

- *Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through December 31](#) on a site management plan for the Orrs Ferry unit. There is [a storymap](#) for the project. Source: [Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area](#)
- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Muir Woods National Monument, Point Reyes National Seashore, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park* - The NPS and the

Federal Aviation Administration have [opened public comment through January 2](#) on a proposed commercial air tour voluntary agreement for the four parks. Source: [Golden Gate National Recreation Area](#)

- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - Public comment is [open through January 8](#) on a plan to improve wetland habitats and stabilize moose populations in the park. Source: [Rocky Mountain National Park](#)

Other Relevant Department of the Interior and U.S Forest Service (Dept of Agriculture) News

- *Streamlined process for water infrastructure* - On November 25, Interior Secretary Doug Burgum signed Secretary's Order 3446, directing the Bureau of Reclamation to modify "certain contracts" and establish "new contract terms" that allow partners to manage parts of the procurement process for some federally funded projects. The effort is intended to speed up projects, reduce administrative burdens, and improve efficiency. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$14.6 billion in energy revenue* - On November 24, the Department of the Interior announced that \$14.6 billion in revenue was generated from energy production on federal and Tribal lands and offshore areas. It is the fifth-largest disbursement since 1982. \$1.05 billion will be disbursed to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, while \$150 million will go to the Historic Preservation Fund. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *"One dollar, one tree"* - On December 5, the Department of the Interior announced that Christmas tree harvesting would cost \$1 per tree on Bureau of Land Management lands. A cord of wood is also \$1 through the 2025-2026 winter season. New cutting areas were also opened "in overstocked woodlands, prioritizing locations near communities, military bases, tribal areas and rural counties that benefit most from additional access." Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Public-private housing initiative on public lands* - The Bridgerton-Teton National Forest has approved a plan to collaborate with the Jackson Hole Community Housing Trust to build housing on 3.15 acres of land adjacent to eastern Jackson Hole, Wyoming. It would be owned by the U.S. Forest Service, and would house USFS employees, as well as renting out to other individuals on an affordable housing waitlist. The project is controversial, with proponents citing the deep need for affordable housing, and opponents seeing the project as a slippery slope to privatizing public lands. Source: [WyoFile](#)

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

P.L. 119-46: Passage of H.J. Resolution 133, requesting the Secretary of the Interior to authorize unique and one-time arrangements for display on the National Mall and the Washington Monument during the period beginning on December 31, 2025, and ending on January 5, 2026. Signed on December 2, 2025. This law basically authorizes fireworks and other events on the National Mall and at the Washington Monument to kick off the 250th anniversary year of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Senate Actions

December 2 - The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining concluded a hearing to a number of bills including:

- S. 764, to provide for the designation of certain wilderness areas, recreation management areas, and conservation areas in the state of Colorado that would include designating additional wilderness acreage in Rocky Mountain National Park
- S. 1737, to designate and expand wilderness areas in Olympic National Forest in the state of Washington, and to designate certain rivers in Olympic National Forest and Olympic National Park as Wild and Scenic Rivers. S.1737 would basically designate all segments of the rivers within Olympic National Park as Wild and/or Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Witnesses appearing before the committee were Senator Michael Bennet; Christopher French, Associate Chief, Forest Service, Department of Agriculture; Jon Raby, Nevada State Director, Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior; Kelly Norris, Wyoming State Forestry Division State Forester, Cheyenne; and Jocelyn Torres, Conservation Lands Foundation, Durango, Colorado.

House of Representatives Actions

December 2 - The Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing on several bills including:

- H.R. 4931, the “National Park System Long-Term Lease Investment Act,” which would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to extend certain leases within units of the National Park System without opening the lease to bidding, provided the lease was at least 5-years-old and that the lease and lessee continued to comply with the terms and conditions of the original lease.
- H.R. 5254, the “Gateway Partnership Act of 2025,” which would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to enter into an agreement with the Gateway Arch Park Foundation to host private events in Gateway Arch National Park buildings, and for other purposes. Testimony was heard from Representatives Murphy, Kiggans of Virginia, and McGuire; Robert D. MacLean, Director, Office of Law Enforcement and Security, Department of the Interior; Denise Bowden, Mayor, Chincoteague, Virginia; and public witnesses.

Incidents

Listed alphabetically by park/program.

Arches National Park

Quicksand

On December 7, a 33-year-old got stuck in quicksand while backpacking through Courthouse Wash. The individual use a satellite device to send an request for help. A ranger arrived on foot about two hours later, carrying a shovel. They were unable to extract the individual from the quicksand. A group of rescuers arrived shortly thereafter with boards, ladders, and shovels, and were eventually able to help the individual out of the quicksand. The individual was cold and sore, but uninjured. Source: [Backpacker](#)

Grand Canyon National Park

Waterline break

On December 2, the park announced that “a series of significant breaks” had occurred to the Transcanyon Waterline, resulting in no water availability for the South Rim. As a result, starting on December 6, the park closed all overnight accommodations except for dry camping at Mather Campground. There is no estimated reopening date. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

Haleakalā National Park

Hiker rescue

On November 23 just after 1 AM, two hikers, ages 18 and 20, requested help after finding themselves “out of water and cold” in the Palikū cabin area. The individuals were directed to the Hōlua cabin for water and shelter for the evening. The following morning, Maui firefighters airlifted the two individuals via helicopter to the Kula Park ball fields, where they received further evaluation from Emergency Medical Services. One of the individuals was reported to have a leg injury that would have kept them from walking out on their own. Source: [MauiNow](#)

Olympic National Park

Missing person

On November 30, the vehicle of a 26-year-old was found at the Sol Duc Trailhead. The individual had been last seen in Port Angeles, Washington, on November 17. As of December 9, the individual was still missing, and the park is looking for any information the public may have. Source: [Olympic National Park](#)

Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites

Cashless policy stands

A federal district court once again ruled that the National Park Service may maintain a cashless fee collection policy, dismissing a lawsuit by an individual because they lacked standing to show they were harmed by the policy. The individual’s lawyer has stated they will appeal the decision. Source: [Wyoming News Now](#)

Follow-Ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - On December 4, the park reopened Mauna Loa Road past Kīpukapuauolu and Hilina Pali Road beyond the Maunaiki Trailhead. Both have been closed since late July due to elevated fire danger during “persistently dry weather.” Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - *Outside* published [an interview](#) with SJ Joslin, who was fired from the National Park Service after stationing a transgender pride flag on the face of El Capitan on off-duty time in August. Source: *Outside*

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- Issue Contributors: Costa Dillon, Denny Huffman, Chris Nelson, 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.

To receive a copy of this free publication, [join or support the Coalition](#). Any current, retired, or former-salaried (GS, Wage System, Seasonal, Temporary, or SES) National Park Service employee or volunteer who served under a signed volunteer agreement can join the Coalition. Coalition supporters who do not qualify under those criteria [may also join](#) and receive the newsletter.



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