



The Coalition Report

Wednesday, February 5, 2025

In memory of Bill Halainen

We were deeply saddened to hear of the death of Bill Halainen on January 30. Bill was the brainchild and long-time editor of the National Park Service *Morning Report* and worked for the NPS from 1974 to 2007, then continued writing the *Morning Report* for another eight years as a contractor.

After fully retiring, Bill volunteered endless hours with the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks, creating the *The Coalition Report* in the image of the *Morning Report*. Bill was the recipient of the Coalition's 2014 George Hartzog Award and the 2018 The 1872 Award.

Read more about Bill's life and legacy

Editor note: As the first editor to follow in Bill's footsteps, I have been guided by Bill's commitment to excellence and deep passion and love for parks. I am grateful for his work and the countless other ways he impacted the National Park Service.

-KW

Coalition Actions

The Coalition put out [a press release](#) outlining the impacts of federal job cuts on the National Park Service and reaffirming our support for NPS employees and the oath they fulfill to protect our parks.

Coalition Chair Phil Francis gave [comments to National Parks Traveler](#) regarding safety concerns as staff leave the National Park Service, either through deferred resignation, the withdrawal of

seasonal job offers, or through resultant low morale. Law enforcement staffing has been low for many years prior to recent Executive Orders.

He also provided [comments to the Los Angeles Times](#) arguing that low NPS staffing will result in trash buildup, safety issues, resource damage, and hits to the economy of gateway communities.

The Coalition joined three other conservation organizations in providing [comments](#) to the Environmental Protection Agency regarding its proposal to approve Florida's Regional State Implementation Plan for the Second Planning Period, arguing that the approval fails to acknowledge or address many significant errors and the plan should be heavily revised or disapproved.

We also joined three other conservation organizations in providing [comments](#) to the Environmental Protection Agency regarding its proposal to approve revisions to the Taconite Federal Implementation Plan for the First Planning Period related to the Michigan and Minnesota Air Plan. In particular, the comments call for a revision of the new emission limits by completing Best Available Retrofit Technology analyses.

The Coalition also provided [comments](#) on the Environmental Protection Agency's proposal to partially disapprove California's Regional Haze State Implementation Plan for the second implementation period, supporting the decision for disapproval due to inadequacies in the plan.

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.

- *Hiring freeze* - On January 20, President Donald Trump issued an Executive Order ordering a 90-day hiring freeze of all federal civilian employees, including all vacant positions and no creation of new positions. Within 90 days, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Personnel Management and the Administrator of the United States Department of Government Efficiency Service, is expected to submit a plan to reduce the size of the federal government. Shortly thereafter, individuals who had received job offers for seasonal NPS work received emails saying the offers had been "rescinded." The emails stated, "Should the bureau be able to fill the position again, another announcement will be posted in due course." Source: [The White House](#), [SFGate](#)
- *Closure of all DEIA offices and contracts* - On January 22, the Department of the Interior announced to all employees that it is closing all Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility offices and ending all DEIA-related contracts, concordant with President Donald Trump's Executive Orders, "Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing," and "Initial Rescissions of Harmful Executive Orders and Actions." The DOI also called upon all employees to report any efforts to disguise these types of programs "by using coded or imprecise language." Source: [Oregon Public](#)

Broadcasting

- *“Deferred resignation”* - On January 28, federal employees received an email, titled “Fork in the Road,” outlining President Donald Trump’s priorities for the federal workforce: 1) Return to office, 2) Performance culture, 3) More streamlined and flexible workforce, 4) Enhanced standards of conduct. It then offered individuals the opportunity to reply “Resign” before February 6 under “deferred resignation,” and said employees would retain all pay and benefits through September 30. Source: [Office of Personnel Management](#)
- *Recalling remote work* - On January 20, President Donald Trump issued an Executive Order calling for all federal agencies to terminate remote work arrangements. On January 24, acting Interior Secretary Walter Cruickshank sent an internal memorandum calling all telework and remote work employees back to in-person work no later than February 23. Source: [Politico](#), [The White House](#)
- *Attempted funding freeze for financial assistance programs* - On January 27, Matthew Vaeth, the acting Director of the Office of Management and Budget, issued a memorandum asking all federal agencies to pause all financial assistance programs while they undergo review so that federal resources are not used “to advance Marxist equity, transgenderism, and green new deal social engineering policies.” On January 28, a federal judge temporarily blocked the order after a group filed a lawsuit claiming the order violates the First Amendment and the Administrative Procedures Act. On January 29, the Trump administration rescinded the memo. NPS programs that would have been affected by the order are numerous and listed in this article by [National Parks Traveler](#). Source: [University of Colorado - Boulder](#), [National Parks Traveler](#), [Wall Street Journal](#)
- *Suspension of delegated authority* - On January 20, acting Secretary of the Interior Walter Cruickshank issued Order No. 3415, a 60-day suspension of delegated authority, including publishing notices in the Federal Register, issuing Resource Management Plans, granting conveyances of property, appointing/hiring/promoting personnel (except seasonal hires and emergency work force personnel), and issuing any renewable energy development. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Schedule F guidance and implementation* - On January 24, the Office of Personnel Management issued guidance to federal agency heads on how to implement Schedule F, now known as Schedule Policy/Career. They have been given a 90-day deadline to re-classify tens of thousands of federal workers in “policy-related positions.” The guidance states that employees are “not required to personally or politically support the current president or the policies of the current administration,” but “they are required to faithfully implement administration policies to the best of their ability.” Source: [Government Executive](#)
- *New DOI Secretary* - On January 30, the U.S. Senate voted 79-18 to confirm Doug Burgum as the new Secretary of the Interior. Doug is the former Governor of South Dakota. Source: [Florida Phoenix](#)

- *Forest failure study* - *Bay Journal* published [an article](#) about NPS research from 2023 that found that forest health in the eastern United States greatly declined due to an overabundance of deer. Source: *Bay Journal*
- *Kevin Costner NPS series* - On February 8, *Fox Nation* will debut a three-part docuseries called "Yellowstone to Yosemite," produced by actor and filmmaker Kevin Costner. The series is a follow-up to his previous series, "Yellowstone: One-Fifty," which aired in 2022 on *Fox Nation*. Source: [San Francisco Chronicle](#)

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Badlands National Park* - The NPS issued a prospectus for a 10-year concession contract managing the Cedar Pass Lodge, including food and beverage, retail, and a campground. The new contract would begin November 1. Proposals are due March 19. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Big Bend National Park* - On May 1, the park will close the Chisos Basin area for two major construction projects, including rebuilding the Chisos Mountains Lodge and replacing water lines. The projects are being funded by the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [mrt](#)
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - On January 23, The Conservation Fund, working with Mainspring Conservation Trust and the North Carolina Forest Service, announced the protection of almost 4,000 acres of property in the Great Balsam Mountains in Jackson County, North Carolina, along the Blue Ridge Parkway. It borders four miles of the parkway near Milepost 433. Source: [BlueRidgeNow](#)
- *Buffalo National River* - On January 22, the park and Newton County (AR) began a road improvement project on Cave Mountain Road/Newton County Road 5. Some lane closures will be in place. The road improvement project is expected to be completed in phases and will last several months. Source: [Buffalo National River](#)
- *Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site* - On January 22, the park reopened public access to the barn and the Connemara goats. The barn has been closed due to damage from Hurricane Helene in September 2024. The Front Lake parking lot and trail remain closed while the park goes through funding, compliance, and contracting processes to install a temporary bridge to the Front Lake area. Source: [Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site](#)
- *Denali National Park and Preserve* - On January 20, President Donald Trump signed an Executive Order reinstating the name "Mount McKinley" to the mountain currently known as Denali, effective after 30 days. On January 27, the Alaska House of Representatives

voted 28-10 to request that President Trump reverse the Executive Order. On January 29, the Alaska House of Representatives reconsidered the vote, resulting in 31-8 requesting President Trump reverse the Executive Order. The Resolution will advance to the Alaska Senate next, where it is expected to receive broad support. Source: *Alaska Beacon* ([1/27, 1/29](#)), [The White House](#)

- *Fort Washington Park* - On January 31, the park announced it is extending the temporary closure of the visitor center for rehabilitation and exhibit installation through February 7. Source: [National Capital Parks - East](#)
- *George Washington Memorial Parkway* - On February 2, the parkway enacted a new traffic pattern that will last through late 2025, in order to continue the next phase of the North Parkway Rehabilitation Project. From the Route 123 interchange to Windy Run Bridge, southbound drivers will use the inner (left) southbound lane, while the outer (right) lane is closed for construction activities. Only a single southbound lane will be open at all times, including rush hour. Source: [George Washington Memorial Parkway](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - *Citizen Times* published [an article](#) about a two-year study the park will engage in this summer, focused on hellbender salamanders. Hellbenders have been proposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to be listed as an endangered species. Public comment on the proposal is open through February 11. Source: *Citizen Times*
- *Jimmy Carter National Historical Park* - On January 31, the park released photos of the final resting place for President Jimmy Carter, located on park grounds. President Carter passed away at 100-years-old on December 29. He is interred next to First Lady Rosalynn Carter, who passed away in 2023. Source: [The Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#)
- *Lake Chelan National Recreation Area* - On January 29, the NPS put out a solicitation for proposals for a new 10-year concession contract to operate lodging, food and beverage, retail, campground, and related visitor services at Stehekin. Proposals are due March 21. Source: [North Cascades National Park](#), [SAM.gov](#)
- *Mammoth Cave National Park* - *USA Today* published [an article](#) about the 1917 two-week underground entrapment of Floyd Collins, an incident that led to the establishment of Mammoth Cave National Park. Source: *USA Today*
- *Minute Man National Historical Park* - On November 15, the NPS acquired a single-family home next to the historic Barrett House. The acquisition expands acreage related to Barrett Farm, a historic property where “British Regulars searched for artillery and ammunition in 1775” before the Revolutionary War battle at Old North Bridge. Source: [The Concord Bridge](#)
- *Wind Cave National Park* - On January 28, cave tours resumed for the first time since May 2024 after the completion of a year-long project to replace and modernize the cave’s

elevator system. Source: [Wind Cave National Park](#)

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

- Kenneth “Ken” Roland Coffelt, 86, passed away on January 25. Ken spent summers in high school working at the Giant Forest and Mineral King in Sequoia National Park as a pack station guide. Source: [Legacy/City View Funeral Home and Cemetery](#)
- Michelle Lee DeMatteo, 65, passed away on January 30. Michelle worked for the NPS for a time as a budget analyst. Source: [Outer Banks Voice](#)
- John Joseph Doyle, III, 67, passed away on December 19, 2023. John worked for the NPS for many years, including as a fee manager at the National Capital Region. Source: [R.T. Foard](#), Philip Selleck [Editor note: The 2023 date is correct. We honor all deceased park employees as they come to our attention.]
- Robert “Bob” “Jake” Jacobsen passed away on January 24. Jake worked for the NPS for many years, including time at Olympic National Park, in the Washington Office, at Great Basin National Park, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park, and as superintendent at Shenandoah National Park. Source: Jim Dempsey
- W. James “Jim” Judge, 90, passed away on December 1, 2024. Jim’s father was a park ranger Glacier National Park when he was a child. Jim later went on to become the chief research archaeologist and director of the Chaco Project at the University of New Mexico, studying at Chaco Culture National Historical Park for ten years. Source: [Legacy/The Durango Herald](#)
- Raymond Lee Fox, 91, passed away on January 24. Raymond worked for the NPS for a time. Source: [Williamsburg Yorktown Daily](#)
- Arthur F. Graham, 93, passed away on January 24. Arthur worked for the NPS from 1958 to 1987, including as a superintendent at De Soto National Memorial. Source: [The Daytona Beach News-Journal](#), [National Park Service Historic Listing of National Park Service Officials](#)
- Kimberli Pogemiller-Carrasco, 55, passed away on January 3. Kimberli worked for the NPS for 15 years, including as assistant to the superintendent at Bandelier National Monument. Source: [Legacy/Santa Fe New Mexican](#)
- Thomas “Tom” James Keast, 86, passed away on December 30, 2024. Tom spent

summers in college working as a radio operator on Mott Island at Isle Royale National Park. Source: [Upper Michigan Source \(TV6\)](#)

- John Thomas “Tom” Ritter, 88, passed away on January 12. Tom spent his career working for the National Park Service, including time as a firefighter at Mesa Verde National Park, and time in Nevada, Utah, Alaska, Minnesota, Virginia, California, and Washington. Source: [Neptune Society](#)
- Bobby Ray Taylor, 91, passed away on January 25. Bobby volunteered with the NPS in Utah for a time. Source: [Legacy/Sharkey Funeral Home](#)
- Kenneth “Ken” Stephen Wilk, 67, passed away on February 1. Ken worked as a seasonal park ranger for the NPS at the Sandy Hook Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area in 1978 and 1979. Source: [Legacy/Feltner Funeral Home](#)

Retired

- Cicely Muldoon will retire from the NPS at the end of February. She worked for the NPS for 40 years, most recently as the superintendent at Yosemite National Park. Source: [myMotherLode.com](#)

In the News

- Deb Haaland, the recently-departed former Secretary of the Interior, announced that she will run for New Mexico governor in 2027. Source: [AP News](#)
- On January 14, Chuck Sams, the recently-departed former Director of the NPS, was nominated to serve on the Pacific Northwest Electric Power and Conservation Planning Council. He previously served on the council from March to December 2021. His nomination will be considered by the Oregon Senate Committee on Rules in February. Source: [East Oregonian](#)

Open for Comment

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

- *National Park Service* - Public comment is [open through March 17](#) on a proposed rule to determine where and how micromobility devices, such as e-scooters, hoverboards, and Segways, may be operated in national park units. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Assateague Island National Seashore* - Public comment is [open through March 18](#) on a proposal to remove requirements about vehicle weight ground clearance, and dimensions for driving on designated beaches and oversand routes. Source: [OC Today-Dispatch](#)

- *Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park* - Public comment is [open through February 9](#) on a proposal to rehabilitate the amphitheater adjacent to the South Rim campground, including improvements to accessibility, acoustics, and dark sky viewing. Source: [Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park](#)
- *Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Curecanti National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through February 6](#) on a fire management plan for the two parks. Source: [Curecanti National Recreation Area](#)
- *Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park* - Public comment is [open through March 7](#) on a development concept plan for Great Falls in Montgomery County, Maryland. Source: [Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park](#)
- *Fort Raleigh National Historic Site* - Public comment is [open through February 7](#) on alternatives to stabilize one mile of shoreline that is rapidly eroding. Source: [Fort Raleigh National Historic Site](#)
- *National Capital Parks - East* - Public comment is [open through February 10](#) on design concepts to restore 10 acres of habitat at Kingman Lake within the Anacostia River Watershed. Source: [National Capital Parks - East](#)
- *National Trails System* - Public comment is [open through February 15](#) on a Buckeye National Scenic Trail Feasibility Study to evaluate potential inclusion in the National Trails System. Source: [National Park Service Midwest Region](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - Public comment is [open through February 12](#) on a plan to allow Tribal members to collect plants for cultural and traditional uses. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)

Other Department of the Interior News

- *Grizzly ESA public meetings canceled* - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service canceled four public meetings about the grizzly bear Endangered Species Act status just one day before the first was to start in Missoula, Montana. The statement stated that the cancellation is due to “the need for this Administration to review the recent grizzly bear proposed rule.” Public meetings by other federal agencies were also canceled. Source: [Mountain Journal](#)

Congressional Actions

Reports on legislation, upcoming 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.

Senate Actions

January 20: The Senate received and agreed to take into consideration the nomination of Douglas Burgam, of South Dakota, to be Secretary of the Interior.

January 22: The Senate received and agreed to take into consideration the nomination of Katharine MacGregor, of Florida, to be Deputy Secretary of the Interior.

January 23: The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources: In a business meeting, the Committee ordered favorably reported the Amendment of Rule 6(b) of the Committee Rules to establish the reporting quorum, and the nominations of Douglas Burgum, of North Dakota, to be Secretary of the Interior, and Christopher Wright, of Colorado, to be Secretary of Energy.

January 27 and 28: The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources conducted and concluded their hearing regarding the consideration of the nomination of Douglas Burgum, of North Dakota, to be Secretary of the Interior.

January 29: The Senate Committee on Appropriations announced subcommittee assignments for the 119th Congress. The following Senators shall serve on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies: Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Chair, Mitch McConnell (R-KT), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), John Hoeven (R-ND), Deb Fischer (R-NE), Markwayne Mullin (R-OK), Mike Rounds (R-SD), Jeff Merkley (D-OR) Ranking Member, Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), and Jon Ossoff (D-GA).

January 30: The Senate confirmed the nomination of Douglas Burgum, of North Dakota, to be Secretary of the Interior by a vote of 79 yeas to 18 nays.

House Actions

January 21: The House agreed to suspend the rules and pass the following measures:

- Authorizing the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation to establish a commemorative work on the National Mall to honor the extraordinary acts of valor, selfless service, and sacrifice displayed by Medal of Honor recipients: H.R. 186, to authorize the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation to establish a commemorative work on the National Mall to honor the extraordinary acts of valor, selfless service, and sacrifice displayed by Medal of Honor recipients, by a 2/3 yeas-and-nays vote of 414 yeas with none voting “nay;”
- Providing for the standardization, consolidation, and publication of data relating to public outdoor recreational use of federal waterways among federal land and water management agencies: H.R. 187, amended, to provide for the standardization, consolidation, and publication of data relating to public outdoor recreational use of federal waterways among federal land and water management agencies, by a 2/3 yeas-and-nays vote of 413 yeas with none voting “nay;” and

- Requiring that the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior submit accurate reports regarding hazardous fuels reduction activities: H.R. 204, to require that the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior submit accurate reports regarding hazardous fuels reduction activities.

January 22: The Committee on Natural Resources held an organizational meeting. The Committee adopted its Rules for the 119th Congress, without amendment.

Incidents

Listed alphabetically by park.

Bandelier National Monument

Waterline break

On January 23, a waterline broke just outside the park along New Mexico State Highway 4, requiring the closure of the Tsankawi Unit of the park. It was resolved on January 25, and the Tsankawi Unit reopened. A similar issue took place on January 10 and took a week to fix. Source: Bandelier National Monument ([press release](#), [Facebook post](#))

Blue Ridge Parkway

Bicyclist fatality

On January 28, a 73-year-old bicyclist was found deceased lying beside their bicycle on the side of the road near milepost 58. Preliminary investigation indicates the individual died due to a medical emergency during a stop, while on a bike ride. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area

Medical emergency and car accident

On January 30, an individual suffered a medical event while driving in the park, and crashed their vehicle. They were pronounced deceased at the scene. The individual was well-known to park staff as a long-time NPS employee and volunteer, and a Critical Incident Stress Management Team has been requested to support the staff. Source: Rick Smith

Fire Island National Seashore

Canine Distemper Virus

In late December, park staff observed two raccoons “behaving uncharacteristically” at the William Floyd Estate in Mastic Beach, New York. They also found dead raccoons on the estate grounds. The raccoons tested positive for Canine Distemper Virus and avian influenza. Visitors are cautioned to not approach raccoons acting strangely and to be careful with dogs, which can transmit the disease. The William Floyd Estate grounds currently are closed to the public for an annual closure from Thanksgiving through May 1. Source: [Fire Island National Seashore](#)

Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument

Theft of historic wood

In late January, park staff observed that wood siding was removed from a historic barn adjacent to Highway 235 in Nancy, Kentucky. The incident is considered both vandalism and theft. The NPS and local police are investigating, and park is asking for any information the public can provide. Source: [Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument](#)

Rocky Mountain National Park

Avalanche

On January 21, a group of snowshoers traveling along the Emerald Lake Trail triggered an avalanche near Nymph Lake. The slide carried three people and partially buried one person to their knees. No one was injured in the incident. Source: [Sky-Hi News](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *New River Gorge National Park and Preserve* - The Friends of New River Gorge National Park and Preserve and Crime Stoppers of West Virginia are offering a reward of \$1,000 for anyone who can provide tips that lead to a conviction for the vandalism at the Long Point Trail that occurred in December 2024 (see [1/22/25 Coalition Report](#)). Source: [New River Gorge National Park and Preserve](#)
- *The White House and President's Park* - On January 16, a 20-year-old was sentenced to eight years in prison and three years of supervised release for an attempted attack on the White House with a rented U-Haul truck in May 2023 (see [5/29/23 Coalition Report](#)). They pleaded guilty on May 13, 2024, to willful injury or depredation of property of the United States. Source: [WFIV](#)

Acknowledgments

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- Editor: Katie Wallace
- Tech and Production Support: Steve Pittleman, Debbie Reed, Emily Thompson
- Regular Correspondent: Chris Soller
- Issue Contributors: Phil Francis, Mike Murray, Phillip Selleck

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."

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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