



The Coalition Report

Wednesday, October 15, 2025

Coalition Actions

The Coalition and the National Parks Conservation Association submitted [a letter](#) to the National Park Service as part of its open public comment period asking for suggestions for improved visitor services. Comments argued for increasing park staffing and funding, and allowing for reservation systems.

We also submitted [comments](#) to the Bureau of Land Management in opposition to the proposed rescission of the Conservation and Landscape Health Rule (commonly known as the “Public Lands Rule”), arguing that the rule provided much-needed guidance and clarity to the agency’s multiple-use mandate, and that the rule should be revised rather than rescinded. Furthermore, we encouraged the BLM to to revise the Public Lands Rule to consider the impacts caused by proposed use of its lands on adjacent federal lands, such as units of the National Park System.

The Coalition joined four conservation organizations in submitting [comments](#) to the Environmental Protection Agency, opposing its proposed approval of South Carolina’s Regional Haze State Implementation Plan due to the use of a flawed methodology that ignored certain types of emissions and excepted several large polluting facilities from review.

We continue to make statements and give interviews to the press about ongoing threats to the National Park System:

- [Statement](#) urging parks to close for the remainder of the government shutdown, in the wake of illegal behaviors in Yosemite (see more in “National/Regional NPS Updates” below)
- [Press call](#) with Echo Communications Advisors discussing the impacts of the shutdown on visitors, local economies, and public lands
- [Article](#) in *National Parks Traveler* about the impacts of the shutdown on national park units

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.

- *620,000 employees furloughed (and rising)* - Over 620,000 federal employees are currently furloughed due to the lapse in appropriations by Congress, causing a government shutdown. Several thousand more working on temporary carryover funds will be laid off if the shutdown continues. It is estimated that two-thirds of NPS employees have been furloughed. Source: [Government Executive](#), [Sierra](#)
- *OMB says furloughed staff will not receive backpay* - On September 30, the Office of Management and Budget revised its guidance document, “Frequently Asked Questions During a Lapse in Appropriations” to remove a statement that excepted and furloughed employees are entitled to backpay when appropriations are finalized, ending the government shutdown. This is the law under the Government Employee Fair Treatment Act of 2019, passed during President Donald Trump’s first term. Officials in President Trump’s administration have stated that they consider the 2019 law to apply only to the 2019 shutdown and are developing guidance to not backpay furloughed employees. Source: [Government Executive](#)
- *Government shutdown effects on parks* - Many news sources focused on the effects of the government shutdown on parks. Here is a sampling:
 - [“Are national parks open or closed? Here’s the status of the most popular NPS sites”](#) - USA Today
 - [“Empty tollbooths, ‘devastated’ visitors: shutdown throws US national parks into limbo”](#) - The Guardian
 - [“Lack of information leaving national park visitors in the lurch”](#) - National Parks Traveler
 - [“Messy toilets and closed parking: shutdown mars trips to national parks”](#) - The Wall Street Journal
 - [“No rangers, no restrooms, no weddings? Couples caught in shutdown chaos”](#) - USA Today
- The following are a selection of articles focused on the shutdown’s effects on specific parks:
 - *Everglades National Park* - [“‘It’s sad’: Everglades visitors find worrying signs during government shutdown”](#) - WLRN Public Media
 - *Grand Teton National Park* - [“Tourist life in the Tetons goes on, but shutdown hits short-staffed Park Service workers”](#) - County 17/ WyoFile
 - *Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve, New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park* - [“Government shutdown forces closure of national park sites in Louisiana”](#) - Louisiana Illuminator
 - *Joshua Tree National Park* - [“Joshua Tree National Park now an epicenter of](#)

- [concern, confusion”](#) - *SFGate*
 - *Yosemite National Park* - [“Squatters, illegal BASE jumpers invade Yosemite amid federal shutdown”](#) - *SFGate*
- *Friends Groups, businesses, state governments, and individuals help during shutdown* - Many news sources focused on efforts across private and public sectors to support parks and furloughed employees during the shutdown:
 - [“Fundraising groups step up to help reopen national park sites and welcome visitors”](#) - *WTOP*
 - [“Sleeping Bear, Pictured Rocks businesses step in as guides while rangers are out on furlough”](#) - *mLive*
 - [“Governors tap state funds to keep some national parks open during the shutdown”](#) - *NBC News*
 - [“Gov. Rhoden personally funds lights at Mount Rushmore amidst shutdown”](#) - *News.SD.gov*
 - [“Grand Canyon food pantry gears up to assist park employees who are missing paychecks”](#) - *NPR*
 - [“Zinke pitches in on Yellowstone Park maintenance amid shutdown”](#) - *KBZK*
- *Hatch Act violations* - Many government agencies have posted messages on their website blaming the government shutdown on Democrats, which is in violation of the Hatch Act, designed to limit political activities among federal employees to maintain nonpartisan service. The National Park Service’s websites have not violated the Hatch Act; however, inquiries to the Interior Department about the status of national parks, as well as contracts filed during the shutdown, have included messages blaming Congressional Democrats for the shutdown. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Coal leasing adjacent to several UT national parks* - On September 29, the Department of the Interior announced the opening of 13.1 million acres of federal land for coal leasing, including 48,000 acres in Utah. Some of the parcels up for lease are adjacent to Zion National Park, Capitol Reef National Park, and Bryce Canyon National Park, as well as Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (a Bureau of Land Management-administered site). Source: [Salt Lake Tribune](#), [Bureau of Land Management](#)

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Acadia National Park* - Eleven lawmakers in Maine signed a letter to Interior Secretary Doug Burgum asking for removed signs about the effects of climate change and the history of Wabanaki peoples in the region to be returned. The signs were removed as part of the Trump Administration’s efforts to remove signs that “disparage” Americans and that do not focus on the beauty and grandeur of American landscapes. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)

- *Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve (and other Alaska Region parks)* - On October 6, President Donald Trump approved the appeal of the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority, directing the establishment of the Ambler Road Project, a 211-mile road project that would link to the remote Ambler Mining District. It would cross Gates of the Arctic and have greater ecological consequences for other NPS units in the region. The project has been held up by years of litigation. In June 2024, the Department of the Interior had halted permitting on the Ambler Road, and this mandate reverses that decision. Additionally, the mandate includes a \$35.6 million investment by the federal government in Trilogy Metals (the permittee on the project), making it a 10% shareholder. Source: [The White House](#) [Editor note: See “Senate Actions” below for a more detailed breakdown on the possible ramifications of this action.]
- *Glacier National Park* - The *Flathead Beacon* published [an article](#) about federal funding cuts to the U.S. Geological Survey’s Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center, which conducts a variety of scientific studies in the park. Source: *Flathead Beacon*
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - The park has extended a closure on the River Trail through December 2025 to continue work on the Transcanyon Waterline. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - *Knox TN Today* published [an article](#) about NPS volunteer Tom Harrington’s lifelong relationship to the park and passion for volunteering. Source: *Knox TN Today*
- *Hot Springs National Park* - The NPS released a prospectus for a 10-year contract operating the historic Buckstaff bathhouse, including traditional bathhouse services and massage therapy. Proposals are due January 5, 2026. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - On September 30, the Department of the Interior published a video featuring efforts to test six autonomous AI-operated lawnmowers on the National Mall. The project is being funded through an innovation and technology grant from the National Park Foundation. Source: [WJLA](#)
- *The White House and President’s Park, Washington Monument* - A large bronze statue of George Washington was moved from the Washington Monument to the Rose Garden at the White House, at the request of President Donald Trump. It has previously been indoors, and has now been “prepped for a life outdoors.” NPS conservators will monitor its condition to prevent it from turning a green hue due to weathering. Source: [NBC News](#)

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

- Jacob William Hughes, 97, passed away on October 3. Jacob made his career working for the federal government, including a stint with the National Park Service. Source: [WashingtonJewishWeek](#)
- Ann Satterthwaite, 94, passed away on September 20. Ann helped found the Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park along the Potomac River, which fundraised for, then established the park as a unit of Rock Creek Park in 2011. Source: [The Georgetown](#)
- Timothy “Tim” Edward Shepard, 49, passed away on October 5. Tim worked for a time at Sequoia National Park and Yellowstone National Park. Source: [Chicago Tribune](#)
- David Steensen, 68, passed away on September 25. David worked for the NPS for over 30 years, including time at Redwood National Park (now Redwood National and State Parks) and as the chief of the Geological Resources Division. He retired from the NPS in 2019. Source: Cacia Steensen
- Thomas “Tom” Edward White, 88, passed away on September 28. Tom worked for the NPS for over 33 years, including time at Manassas National Battlefield Park, National Capital Area Parks, Fort Laramie National Historic Site, the Southern Arizona Group, Hawai’i Volcanoes National Park, and Harpers Ferry Center. Source: [Brown Funeral Home](#), [The Shepherdstown Chronicle](#)

In the News

- This week, Coalition Member Walt Dabney is giving talks at three film screenings hosted by the Badlands Conservation Alliance in North Dakota. Walt worked for many NPS for many years, including time at Yellowstone, Grand Teton, Yosemite, Everglades, and Mount Rainier National Parks. Source: [North Dakota Monitor](#)
- William “Billy” Hewes, III, was nominated by President Donald Trump to be a commissioner of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Billy previously served on the National Park System Advisory Board. Source: [Crowell](#)

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.

- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - Public comment is open through November 6 on a National Mall telecommunications infrastructure plan to provide “full 5G coverage from all major wireless carriers while protecting the views, character, and historic resources of the park.” Source: [E&E News](#)

Other Department of the Interior News

- *Black-footed ferrets in limbo* - 280 captive-bred ferrets, slated to be reintroduced into the wild at 15 sites across federal, tribal, and private lands this fall, are currently in limbo due to the government shutdown. Typically, they are released in the fall, when kits typically leave their parents to learn how to hunt and survive, and to mate up before denning for the winter. If the government shutdown continues, it's possible they will be released too late to survive the winter or not at all this year, which could negatively affect their conditioning. There are only ~700 ferrets currently left in the wild, and the reintroduction effort would boost the population immensely. Source: [SFGate](#)

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.

Senate Actions

On October 8th and 9, the Senate passed three measures that provided for congressional disapproval of rules submitted by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) under the Congressional Review Act:

- Eastern Montana's "Miles City Field Office Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment" (H.J. Res. 104);
- "North Dakota Field Office Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan" (H.J. Res 105); and
- "Central Yukon Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan" (H.J. Res. 106).

This action by the Senate follows the same action taken by the House of Representatives in early September. These resolutions will now be submitted to the President for approval. President Donald Trump is expected to approve all three resolutions.

All three will open up vast acreage in the three areas to mining and mineral development and extraction. The Central Yukon plan, in particular, blocked the development of the Ambler Access Project (Ambler Road), a 211-mile road through the Brooks Range foothills in northern Alaska that includes about 26 miles through the Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.

There is major concern that the use of the Congressional Review Act is in conflict with other Acts, specifically the Administrative Procedure Act, and the Federal Lands Policy Management Act (FLPMA). The FLPMA directs, legislatively, the BLM and other land management agencies to

develop resource management plans. All three of the plans disapproved by Congress went through extensive public review and comment in their development and in compliance with FLPMA requirements.

Initially, the Administration had directed the Department of the Interior to review the three Resource Management Plans (RMP) in an effort to overturn them. Congress invoking the Congressional Review Act was a much speedier means to overturn them.

There is real concern that the use of the CRA to overturn these three RMPs could result in invalidating previously approved RMPs in many other BLM Field Offices as well as land management and resource management plans developed and approved by other land management agencies, possibly including the National Park Service. These actions have the potential to undermine how public lands are managed and could result in legal challenges to existing permits, leases, and rights-of-way.

Background info:

What's a Resource Management Plan? The Conservation Lands Foundation explains: "Resource management plans are strategic processes of the Bureau of Land Management to guide the management of public lands and resources. They involve comprehensive planning that determines the best use of land and resources such as minerals, grazing, water, wildlife, recreation, and areas designated for conservation. The goal of an RMP is to balance various land uses while ensuring sustainable practices that protect the environment and meet public needs. This process includes stakeholder input, environmental assessments, and legal considerations, resulting in a plan that directs land management activities, typically over a period of 15-20 years."

What's the Congressional Review Act? The Wilderness Society says: "The CRA is a blunt legislative tool that allows Congress to roll back administrative rules—and prevent similar future rules—within a certain period of an agency submitting that rule to Congress. Once a joint resolution is filed disapproving of a rule, the rule can be overturned by a simple majority vote. If a rule is rescinded through a CRA resolution, it triggers a clause that bars agencies from issuing a subsequent rule that is 'substantially the same' as the one overturned."

Wes Siler, who writes about natural resource issues, has written extensively on the danger of using the CRA in this fashion in [his newsletter](#).

House of Representatives Actions

House was in recess; nothing to report.

Incidents

Listed alphabetically by park/program.

Cape Hatteras National Seashore **Another house collapse**

On October 3, an unoccupied house in Rodanthe, North Carolina, collapsed onto the beach. It was the sixth house collapse that week, with five others collapsing on September 30. No injuries were reported in the incidents, and the entire beachfront from northern Buxton through off-road vehicle ORV ramp 43 remains closed. The park is working to collect debris that has drifted south of the collapse sites, and property owners are tasked with removing debris from village beach areas. Dare County (NC) has a debris removal contractor that will support the efforts. Source: Cape Hatteras National Seashore ([10/2](#), [10/3](#))

Great Sand Dunes National Park

Suspected poaching

On September 9 or 10, an elk was poached in the Hudson drainage area of the preserve. Identifying details about the individual and their truck have been released, and the NPS is looking for any details the public might be able to provide. Source: [KDVR](#)

Indiana Dunes National Park

Visitor falls down dune

On October 1, an individual was hiking in the park, when they sat down on a tree branch to rest. The branch broke and the individual fell 10-15 feet down the side of a sand dune. The individual experienced “dizziness” from the fall, but was otherwise uninjured. However, due to the steepness of the dune and instability of the sand, they were unable to climb back up. Personnel from the Porter and Chesterton (IN) Fire Departments secured a rope bag to a tree on the trail, and helped the individual secure the other end. They were then able to use that rope to climb back up. The individual was transported by ATV back to the trailhead. Source: [WTHR](#)

National Mall and Memorial Parks

Protest encampment cleared

On October 3, the U.S. Park Police cleared out a protest encampment outside Union Station occupied by a group called FLARE (“For Liberation and Resistance Everywhere”). They had been stationed there for 24 hours per day since May. A statement by the Department of the Interior said that “the permitted event violated the terms of their permit.” Source: [CBS6 Albany](#)

Scotts Bluff National Monument

Human remains found

On October 10, a visitor observed human bones on the north side of the park. Personnel from several agencies, including two teams of cadaver dogs, were deployed to the scene to do a thorough search for remains and evidence. Agencies involved included Gering (NE) Police, Gering Fire and Rescue, Scotts Bluff County Sheriff’s Office, Scottsbluff Police, the NPS, and the Scotts Bluff County CERT Team. The investigation remains ongoing. Source: [KNEB](#)

Yosemite National Park

Climber fatality

On October 1, a 23-year-old, completed a climb on the “Sea of Dreams” route of El Capitan. They began to bring their haul bag up the last pitch when it became stuck. The individual began to descend their rope to attempt to free it when they rappelled off the end of the rope. They passed away in the fall. Source: [NBC News](#)

Wildfires

- *Joshua Tree National Park* - On October 12, a wildfire started near the Black Rock campground. The campground, Black Rock visitor center, and surrounding trails have been closed. As of October 14, it was 72 acres and 80% contained. The cause is yet to be determined. Source: [Desert Sun](#)
- *Mount Rainier National Park* - The Naches Peak Trail remains closed to protect public health and safety due to the Wildcat Fire, which is burning outside the park on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. (Shriner Peak Trail and trailheads on SR123 between Cayuse Pass and Stevens Canyon Road reopened on September 19.) Source: Mount Rainier National Park ([Facebook page](#), [Current conditions](#))
- *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. On July 30, the Staircase Campground and “areas across the causeway on the north side of Lake Cushman” were evacuated. Many trails and wilderness camps around the Staircase area and in the North Fork Skokomish Drainage remain closed. As of October 10, the Bear Gulch Fire was 20,233 acres and 5% contained, with 16 personnel assigned. Source: Olympic National Park ([7/7](#), [7/8](#), [Fire Conditions and Updates](#)), Watch Duty (app), [Inciweb](#), [Mason County \(WA\) Sheriff’s Office Facebook page](#), [Olympic National Park Facebook page](#)
- *Zion National Park* - On October 7, a lightning-caused fire was reported to park staff in the West Rim area of the park. The Lava Point Road and West Rim Trail between Scout Lookout and Lava Point are closed. As of October 12, the Blue Creek was 100% contained at 75 acres. Source: [Zion National Park](#), Watch Duty (app)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Grand Canyon National Park* - On November 1, the park will reopen Phantom Ranch and Bright Angel Campground for overnight visits. The lower South Kaibab trail below The Tipoff and the lower North Kaibab Trail to the Ribbon Falls junction will also reopen that day. They have been closed due to Dragon Bravo Fire. The upper North Kaibab Trail and Cottonwood Campground remain closed due to “significant rockfall and safety concerns.” Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - On October 2, the art installation depicting President Donald Trump holding hands with Jeffrey Epstein was reinstalled after being abruptly removed by NPS staff on September 24 (see [10/1/25 Coalition Report](#)). The artists said that after it was removed, they applied for and received a second permit to install the statue, but it was revoked by phone “without explanation” the day it was to be installed. A third permit was approved, allowing the reinstallation. Source: [National Public Radio](#)

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If you see something that might be of interest to Coalition members, send it to:
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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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