



The Coalition Report

Wednesday, April 29, 2026

Coalition Actions

The Coalition was honored to receive the National Parks Conservation Association's [2026 Marjory Stoneman Douglas Award](#) for our advocacy efforts to protect the National Park System.

We joined seven other conservation groups in submitting [comments](#) opposing the NPS' proposed rule to allow state-authorized hunting practices in national preserves inside Alaska, including bear baiting and predator reduction.

The Coalition submitted [comments](#) to the Environmental Protection Agency in opposition to its proposed plan to partially disapprove of Hawai'i's Regional Haze State Implementation Plan on the basis of a late intervention by Hawaiian Electric Company. We urge the EPA to approve Hawai'i's plan to improve air quality and visibility.

The Coalition joined nine other conservation groups and the Western Environmental Law Center in submitting [a protest letter](#) to the Bureau of Land Management, asking it to halt Second Quarter oil and gas lease sales in Wyoming and New Mexico due to legally inadequate environmental reviews.

We joined five other entities in submitting [comments](#) to the Bureau of Land Management Utah Office's Third Quarter Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale, opposing the leasing of parcels that cross, closely border, or lie within the Old Spanish National Historic Trail.

Former Voyageurs National Park superintendents Mike Ward and Robert DeGross sent [a letter](#) to the U.S. Senate in opposition to H.J. Res. 140, which would allow for sulfide-ore copper mining in the watershed that feeds the Voyageurs and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

(The resolution passed the Senate on April 16.)

Our staff and Executive Council continue to provide statements and interviews to the media highlighting challenges to the National Park System. Recent work includes:

- [Conservation organizations protest gas and oil sites near national park](#), *The Dickinson Press*
- [Latest U.S. Customs and Border Protection Map Returns Border Wall to Big Bend](#), *National Parks Traveler*
- [National parks brace for summer surge as Trump administration proposes more staff cuts](#), *Los Angeles Times*
- [On Congress opening up one of America's most treasured landscapes to mining: "We will be living with the consequences of this for generations"](#), press release

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.

- *NPS director nominee withdrawn* - On April 27, the Trump administration announced the withdrawal of Scott Socha as a nominee to be Director of the National Park Service. Source: [The White House](#)
- *National Parks Traveler to close* - On April 6, *National Parks Traveler* announced that without the intervention of a new, long-term donor, the site will soon close. The national park news outlet has been in operation for 21 years. *SFGate* published [an article](#) chronicling the business' trajectory and Kurt Repanshek's career. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#), *SFGate*
- *GWS launches censored content site* - On April 20, the George Wright Society announced the launch of a new search tool to find content that has been removed or altered on websites for the NPS, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The content includes climate change, conservation, DEI initiatives, and perspectives from historically marginalized or underrepresented groups. Source: [George Wright Society](#)
- *PEER report shows no savings from restructuring* - Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility requested Freedom of Information Act documentation for Interior Department records showing cost savings to taxpayers and costs assessed to individual bureaus due to agency reorganization, resulting in a response that showed they have no records to show the efficiencies they claimed. PEER describes the situation as "a profound degree of maladministration," describing agencies losing staff positions that were moved to the Interior level, and now paying a surcharge to the Secretary's Office to cover the overhead costs for managing each position. Source: [Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility](#)

- *Economic impact and future of NPS* - *Harvard Magazine* published [an interview](#) with Linda J. Bilmes, a senior lecturer and public policy expert at Harvard Kennedy School, about the economic contributions and future of the National Park System. Linda also previously served on the National Park System Advisory Board and National Parks Second Century Commission. Source: *Harvard Magazine*
- *PBS special on future of parks* - On April 23, *PBS News Hour* published [an episode](#) titled “What is the future of America’s national parks?” discussing the challenges to maintaining the National Park System under budget and staffing cuts. It includes an interview with National Park Foundation president and CEO Jeff Reinbold. Source: *PBS News Hour*

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Big Bend National Park* - The Sierra Club published an article about E.E. Townsend, whose efforts in the early 1900s led to the protection of the park. Source: [Sierra Club: Lone Star Chapter](#)
- *Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area* - In May, the NPS and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will begin a repair project on the Brewster Bridge, which was “heavily damaged during significant rain events in 2022 and 2023.” The project is expected to be complete in mid-summer. Source: [Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area](#)
- *Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park* - On April 27, the park resumed the next phase of a rehabilitation project on Dyer Road. Closures will be in place through its completion in late May. Source: [Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park](#)
- *Coronado National Memorial* - A border monument marking the southern terminus of the Arizona National Scenic Trail on the Mexico border within the park is now closed due to plans to construct barrier walls. The Arizona Trail Association is working with the NPS to establish a new terminus at Coronado Peak this summer. Source: [GearJunkie](#)
- *Denali National Park and Preserve* - An Alaska Army National Guard Chinook helicopter recently supported the delivery of 5,500 pounds of cargo and equipment to Denali Base Camp at 7,200 feet on the Kahiltna Glacier. In addition to supporting the National Park Service with camp set-up prior to climbing season, the mission was used to train two pilots, “exposing them to conditions that cannot be replicated anywhere else.” Source: [U.S. National Guard](#)
- *George Washington Memorial Parkway* - On April 23, the NPS began a project to resurface the parkway and replace pedestrian crossing medians between Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and First Street in Alexandria, Virginia. Work is expected to be complete in June, and lane closures will be in place. Source: [George Washington Parkway](#)

- *Grand Portage National Monument* - In March, the park received the Charles S. Marshall Unit Award from Eastern National, recognizing excellence in partnership, education, and interpretation in collaboration with Ojibwe people. Source: [Grand Portage National Monument](#)
- *Grand Teton National Park* - Due to a July 2025 Executive Order requiring the Department of the Interior to rescind rules that “unnecessarily restrict recreation”, Grand Teton is reconsidering building a multi-use pathway along Moose-Wilson Road. In 2016, after an extensive environmental analysis and public comment, the park decided to not move forward on the project, citing “adverse impacts on park resources, including significant net increases in wildlife habitat disturbance and fragmentation, changes to the character and visual quality of the corridor, and adverse impacts on a major archaeological site and possibly other unidentified archeological sites.” Source: [Jackson Hole News and Guide](#)
- *Grand Teton National Park, Yellowstone National Park* - On April 13, the Teton County (WY) Board of Commissioners sent [a letter](#) to the Department of the Interior, invoking Secretary’s Order 3434 to better liaise with gateway communities, to argue in favor of keeping public lands in public hands, reversing cuts to staffing and funding, and protecting the parks from “entertainments that cater to amusement-based recreation.” Source: [The Travel](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - On May 4, the park will begin the next phase of its rehabilitation of the Bullhead Trail. The trail will be closed Mondays through Thursdays through November 19. The project is being executed in partnership with the Friends of the Smokies, and has been active since 2024. Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)
- *Hawai’i Volcanoes National Park* - On April 23, the park began a project to replace a bridge entering Nāhuku (also known as Thurston Lava Tube). The tube will remain open, but only accessed from the “the east ‘exit’ end.” The rainforest trail and the stairs that lead to the trail will also be closed. The project is expected to be complete by the end of June. Source: [Hawai’i Volcanoes National Park](#)
- *Heritage Documentation Programs (an NPS-administered program)* - On April 15, the NPS and the Library of Congress announced the winners of the 2025 Leicester B. Holland Prize, an annual competition for the best single-sheet measured drawing of a historic building, site, or structure. The winning award was given to Dewey Ervin, Jr., for documentation of Roseneath Farm in Florence County, South Carolina. Source: [Library of Congress](#)
- *Isle Royale National Park* - On April 27, researchers from Michigan Tech University reported that their annual winter survey of wolf populations on the island found 37 individuals, up from 30 in 2024, and the highest since the late 1970s. The island’s moose population was found to be 524 individuals, down 75% from a high of 2,000 in 2019. Wolves likely killed a quarter of the moose population over the last year, and no moose calves were observed for the first time in almost 70 years. Source: [Count on 2 News](#)

- *Lincoln Memorial* - On April 23, President Donald Trump announced that the Reflecting Pool at the memorial would be coated in a color he called “American flag blue,” scrapping plans to replace the granite lining the pool. President Trump explained that it would look better and be done less expensively and more quickly than a granite resurfacing. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - On April 21, the NPS announced the reopening of Tidal Basin after a major restoration of the Potomac River seawalls and the shoreline. The project was funded through the Great American Outdoors Act. Source: [WJLA](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - On April 16, the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts approved the concept design for a proposed 250-foot-tall arch at the end of Memorial Bridge. Feedback was given on the design, and the commission is expected to review and vote on an updated design next. Source: [PBS News](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - On May 11, the park will begin a project to replace a bridge between Nymph Lake and Dream Lake. Trail access will be closed above Nymph Lake to the Dream Lake-Lake Haiyaha junction from May 14-18 and May 18-21 for the work. Source: [Rocky Mountain National Park](#)
- *Sitka National Historical Park* - A new study by the U.S. Geological Survey and NPS found that abundances of native pink salmon on the Indian River have increased exponentially since 1980, now exceeding 100,000 fish annually. There are some concerns that this level of salmon may deplete dissolved oxygen in the water, affecting the ecosystem. The high numbers may be due to a nearby hatchery, ocean productivity, predation intensity, and commercial harvests. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Southeast Regional Office* - On April 23, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (often known as IAM) unionized 130 NPS workers from the region. Among those organized include biological science technicians, hydrologic technicians, outdoor recreation planners, environmental protection specialists, and archaeological technicians. Source: [IAM Union](#)
- *The White House and President’s Park* - *The New York Times* obtained documents showing that the Trump administration has given Clark Construction a no-bid contract to do repairs on the Lafayette Park fountains at highly inflated prices, using the “urgency” exception, which is generally meant to be used for emergencies like war or natural disasters. The contract was also not posted in public databases of federal spending, even though they are supposed to be reported within three days. An Interior Department spokesperson stated “The urgency is to ensure this project is done well ahead of America’s 250th anniversary.” Clark Construction is also overseeing the White House ballroom project. Source: [The New York Times](#)
- *Valley Forge National Historical Park* - On May 4, the NPS will begin a restoration project

on the Isaac Potts House. The house and surrounding area will be closed to visitors for the entirety of the project, which is expected to be complete in 2027. A digital tour is available on the park's website. Source: [Valley Forge National Historical Park](#)

- *Yosemite National Park* - The NPS has published a Finding of No Significant Impact to allow members of seven affiliated Tribes to gather plants for traditional purposes. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)

Lawsuits

Lawsuits involving the National Park Service. If the Coalition is involved in a lawsuit, those will be recorded in "Coalition Actions" above.

- *Big Bend National Park* - On April 16, the Center for Biological Diversity, Friends of the Ruidosa Church, and a river guide and landowner filed a lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security for its efforts to build a border wall through the Big Bend region, arguing that it illegally waived environmental regulations to fast-track construction. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#) (Editor note: Coalition Member and former Big Bend superintendent Bob Krumenaker is quoted in the article.)
- *Mojave National Preserve* - On April 15, the National Parks Conservation Association and Earthjustice filed a lawsuit against the National Park Service and Department of the Interior for allowing a mining company to begin operations at Colosseum Mine. The mine was closed and put into reclamation in 1993, when it was still Bureau of Land Management land, and Mojave National Preserve was established the following year. Dateline Resources, an Australian company, acquired a lease for the mine in 2021 and began efforts to reopen the site. Between 2021 and 2024, the NPS ordered the company to cease and desist and pay restitution for damages. In April 2025, acting NPS Director Jessica Bowron wrote that the company could use an expired mining plan and environmental review from 1985 to continue operations. The lawsuit argues that the mining operations violates the National Environmental Policy Act, Mining in the Parks Act, and the California Desert Protection Act. Source: [SFGate](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - On April 23, the American Civil Liberties Union's Washington, DC, chapter filed a lawsuit against the NPS for threatening to revoke a protest permit for containing language critical of President Donald Trump. An Interior Department spokesperson stated that the language, related to President Trump, the Epstein files, and sexual misconduct, "is not protected under the First Amendment" due to obscenities. The ACLU has stated that "no colorable argument can be made that they are legally obscene. Political criticism of the President is not obscene simply because it references alleged sexual misconduct. Source: [USA Today](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - On April 21, a federal judge blocked a plan to rip out the 15th Street bike lane after a lawsuit from the Washington Area Bicyclist Association. The judge validated that the NPS and Federal Highway Administration had failed to

articulate a “rational connection” between the bike lane and anticipated traffic jams. A recent study showed that car traffic actually sped up after the lanes were installed. Source: [Streetsblog USA](#)

- *The White House and President’s Park* - Following the April 25 White House Correspondents’ Dinner in which an individual fired shots at a Secret Service member, the acting attorney general posted a letter to lawyers representing the National Trust for Historic Preservation, asking them to drop their lawsuit about the proposed White House ballroom. The letter states that “your lawsuit puts the lives of the President, his family, and staff at grave risk.” On April 27, the National Trust for Historic Preservation put out [a press release](#) stating they are not planning to voluntarily dismiss their lawsuit, and “respectfully [asking] the administration to follow the law.” Source: [The Guardian](#), *National Trust for Historic Preservation*
- *Yellowstone National Park* - On April 13, an individual filed a motion to dismiss citations received for driving a truck on roads only open to over-snow vehicles, fishing without a permit, and fishing during a closed season. The individual argues that the Constitution requires Congress to decide what conduct is criminal, and they “improperly handed that sweeping power over to the Executive Branch.” This would make park regulations essentially null and void unless dictated by Congress, which would have sweeping ramifications for the National Park System. The individual is being represented by Pacific Legal Foundation, which made similar arguments in the case of an individual that was found guilty of breaking Grand Teton National Park regulations when they cut trail to set a record (see [11/26/25 Coalition Report](#)). The next hearing will take place on May 12. Source: [Cowboy State Daily](#)

Personnel Changes

- *New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park* - Laurel Racine was selected as the new superintendent. Laurel has 25 years of NPS experience, most recently as the head of the Northeast Region’s cultural resources program, and previously as acting superintendent at New Bedford. She began her new role on February 9. Source: [New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park](#)
- *Vicksburg National Military Park* - Treacy Stone was selected as the new superintendent. He has 11 years of NPS experience, most recently as the chief of facility management and engineering at Grand Canyon National Park. Treacy will begin his new role in June. Source: [Vicksburg National Military Park](#)

Park People

Deceased

- Geraldine “Gerry” Moeckel Bonner, 98, passed away on January 6. Gerry worked as a waitress at Glacier National Park for two summers in her younger years. Source: [East Bay Times](#)
- James “Jim” Kenneth Braggs, 79, passed away on April 13. Jim worked for the NPS for many years, including in Arches and Canyonlands National Parks. He retired from the NPS in 2005. Source: [Legacy/Moab Times-Independent](#)
- Marshall Gingery, 87, passed away on April 15. Marshall worked for the NPS and Department of the Interior for 31 years, including time at Glacier National Park, Acadia National Park, “in Philadelphia,” Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Mammoth Cave National Park, “in Atlanta”, Blue Ridge Parkway, as a regional director of the Department of the Interior, and retiring as the assistant superintendent of science, resource management, and planning at Grand Teton National Park. He was also the son of an NPS ranger, living in Glacier National Park when he was 15-years-old. Source: [Legacy/Helena Independent Record](#)
- Frederick “Fritz” J. Rushlow, 65, passed away on April 10. Fritz worked as a project manager at the Historic Preservation Training Center for over 21 years, retiring in January 2023. Source: [Grove-Bowersox Funeral Home, Inc.](#)
- Thomas “Tom” Allen Smith, 94, passed away on March 16. Tom worked for a time at Yosemite National Park as a seasonal ranger. Source: [Mercury News](#)
- Jerry Ray Yarbrough, 76, passed away on April 19. Jerry worked for the NPS for 25 years, including time at Carlsbad Caverns National Park, Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Timpanogos Cave National Monument, Amistad National Recreation Area, Canyon de Chelly National Monument, White Sands National Park, and retiring as superintendent of Fort Davis National Historic Site. Source: [Harper Funeral Home and Crematory](#)

In the News

- *Business Insider* published [an article](#) written by Danielle Jackson titled, “For 6 years, I worked as a ranger in state and national parks. I always saw visitors making the same 5 mistakes.” Danielle worked for the NPS for several seasons, including time at Shenandoah National Park and Blue Ridge Parkway. Source: *Business Insider*

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.

- *Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail* - Public comment is [open through May 15](#) on a management plan for Kauleoʻī, a 95-acre shoreline parcel on the South Kona coast. Source: [Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail](#)

- *Denali National Park and Preserve* - The Environmental Protection Agency has opened public comment through May 8 on a water quality certification for the Toklat Gravel Extraction Project in the park. Comments can be made via email. Source: [Environmental Protection Agency](#)
- *Flight 93 National Memorial, Fort Necessity National Battlefield, Friendship Hill National Historic Site* - Public comment is [open through May 1](#) on a white-tailed deer management plan for the three parks. Source: [Flight 93 National Memorial](#)
- *Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument* - Public comment is [open through May 6](#) on a General Management Plan for the park. Source: [Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument](#)
- *Los Angeles Coastal Area Special Resource Study* - Public comment is [has been extended through May 23](#) on a Special Resource Study of the Los Angeles coast for possible inclusion in the National Park System. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#), [Los Angeles Daily News](#)
- *Natchez Trace Parkway* - Public comment is open through May 3 on engineering evaluations and cost analyses for cleanup of the [former Ridgeland Firing Range](#) and the [former Port Gibson Firing Range](#). Source: *Natchez Trace Parkway* ([Ridgeland](#), [Port Gibson](#))
- *Petroglyph National Monument* - The NPS, City of Albuquerque, and Tribal partners have opened [public comment through April 30](#) on visitor services and facility enhancements for Boca Negra Canyon and the Lava Shadows area. Source: [Petroglyph National Monument](#)

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

April 13 - The Committee on Appropriations announced the following subcommittee assignments for the 119th Congress: For the Subcommittee on the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies: Senators Murkowski (Chair), McConnell, Capito, Hoeven, Fischer, Rounds, Husted, Merkley, Van Hollen, Heinrich, Baldwin, Gillibrand, and Ossoff.

April 15 and 16 - The Senate began consideration of H.J. Res 140, on the 15th and passed the resolution on the 16th. This joint resolution nullifies Public Land Order 7917, which withdrew approximately 225,504 acres of U.S. Forest Service lands in Cook, Lake, and Saint Louis

Counties, Minnesota, from mineral and geothermal leasing for 20 years. In 2023, the Bureau of Land Management issued the order to protect and preserve the Rainy River Watershed, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Mining Protection Area, and the 1854 Ceded Territory of the Lake Superior Chippewa from the potential adverse effects of mineral and geothermal exploration and development. The joint resolution removes such protections and allows such land to be leased for the exploration and development of minerals and geothermal energy. *[Editor note: See the Coalition's statement opposing this action above in "Coalition Actions"]*

April 22 - The Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Department of Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies concluded a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for Fiscal Year 2027 for the Department of the Interior, after receiving testimony from Doug Burgum, Secretary of the Interior.

House of Representatives Actions

April 2 - The House filed a report on H.R. 1352, to designate the General George C. Marshall House, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, as an affiliated area of the National Park System, and for other purposes, with an amendment. The General George C. Marshall House is located in Leesburg, Virginia and would be managed by the General George C. Marshall International Center.

April 20 - The Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies held a budget hearing on the Department of the Interior. Testimony was heard from Doug Burgum, Secretary, Department of the Interior.

April 21 - The Committee on Natural Resources held a markup on several bills including:

- H.R. 4290, the "Downwinder Commemoration Act of 2025," which would direct the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Air Force, and the Secretary of the Interior to obtain and place plaques honoring the Downwinder communities of New Mexico, who suffered detrimental health effects as a result of exposure to radioactive fallout following the detonation of the first atomic bomb on July 16, 1945. The Secretary of the Interior shall place one plaque at an appropriate, publicly accessible location at White Sands National Park, New Mexico; and
- H.R. 7618, the "American Battlefield Protection Program Amendments Act of 2026," which would amend title 54, United States Code, to modify certain cost-sharing requirements for grant programs under the American Battlefield Protection Program, would expand the program by directing the Secretary of the Interior (acting through the Director of the National Park Service) to prepare studies of sites and structures located in the United States that are thematically tied with nationally significant events that occurred during the French and Indian War from 1754–1763; and the Mexican-American War from 1846–1848.

Both bills were reported as amended.

April 23 - The House filed a report on H.R. 1329, which would permit the Smithsonian American

Women's History Museum to be located within the Reserve of the National Mall, and for other purposes, with an amendment..

Other Relevant Department of the Interior News

- *ESA lawsuit* - On April 15, a group of five conservation groups and the Southern Environmental Law Center filed a lawsuit against the Endangered Species Committee (sometimes known as the “God Squad” or “Extinction Committee”) for proclaiming it can bypass compliance with the Endangered Species Act for oil and gas activities in the Gulf of Mexico due to a “national security emergency.” The committee is accused of not providing the legally required notices and reviews, and illegally invoking the use of emergency powers. Source: *Southern Environmental Law Center*

Incidents

Listed alphabetically by park/program.

Blue Ridge Parkway

Aggressive dogs

Dating back to March, two stray dogs have been roaming the ridgeline near Fork Ridge Overlook. Visitors have reported the dogs multiple times on community pages, documenting them losing weight over time, and an injury on one of their faces. On April 18, the NPS received a report describing the dogs as “aggressive” near milepost 451 at Waterrock Knob. The road was closed to investigate, but the dogs were not found, and the road later reopened. On April 20, the NPS shut down the road between mileposts 443 and 455 to attempt to trap the dogs and move them to a Jackson County (NC) Animal Services shelter. After a five-day search, the NPS announced the dog “appear to have left the area” and the parkway was reopened. Source: [WLOS](#), [The News and Observer](#)

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area

Crash with NPS vehicle

On March 25, a vehicle was traveling at a high speed and passing traffic in the wrong lane on Route 209 near mile marker 3 in Lehman Township when it went by an NPS vehicle. The rangers activated emergency lights and attempted to turn around to initiate a stop. During the turn, the NPS vehicle blocked both lanes, causing a pickup truck to hit the passenger side. Two people in the NPS vehicle were taken to the hospital with minor injuries. The driver of the original speeding vehicle left the area, and Pennsylvania State Police are asking the public for any information they might have regarding the incident. Source: [FOX56](#)

Dry Tortugas National Park

Plane crash

On April 11, a concessioner seaplane that had just completed a passenger drop-off at Fort Jefferson was attempting to depart when a wind gust forced the plane's right wing into the water, flipping the plane into the ocean. There were no passengers onboard other than the pilot, who survived the crash and escaped the plane. Nearby boaters responded quickly, as well as an NPS rescue vessel. The pilot was transported to Lower Keys Medical Center "as a precautionary measure" after the accident, and they were released shortly afterward. Source: [keysnews.com](https://www.keysnews.com)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Bear habituation incidents

Over the weekend of April 18-19, a bear approached groups of visitors twice on the Ramsey Cascades Trail, obtaining two backpacks. In a third incident, a bear displayed "aggressive behavior and briefly chased a group" (also on the Ramsey Cascades Trail). The NPS closed the trail, as well as Ramsey Prong Road to monitor bear activity.

Over the weekend of April 11-12, the NPS responded to "three incidents on Abrams Falls Trail involving an aggressive black bear, including one case where the bear bit a visitor who entered a closed area." The Abrams Falls access road and trail was closed for a week, and reopened after several days with no observed bear activity. Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](https://www.nps.gov/gsmn)

San Antonio Missions National Historical Park

Murder threat conviction

On July 24, 2023, a 31-year-old called the park and left a voicemail that included a threat to murder an NPS employee. Rangers had encountered the individual "on numerous occasions at Mission Concepcion," and they were cited several times for unlawful possession of a controlled substance. The park staff were able to recognize the individual's voice on the voicemail, and they worked with the U.S. Marshals Service to arrest the individual on July 26, 2023. On April 24, a federal jury convicted the individual for threatening to murder a federal official. Source: [United States Attorney's Office: Western District of Texas](https://www.usdoj.gov/epa/press/2023/04/24/23-cv-00001)

Shenandoah National Park

Hiker rescue

On April 19, a visitor hiking on Old Rag Mountain began to experience health challenges, first wobbling, then passing out, in cold and windy conditions. A nearby hiker supported the individual with extra clothing and a small emergency fire, eventually calling for emergency assistance. The NPS called for Med-Flight-1, which extricated the individual via a hoist mechanism and took the individual to UVA Medical Center. Source: [WTVR](https://www.wtvr.com)

Zion National Park

Hiker fatalities

On April 17, a 68-year-old hiker fell from the chained section of the Angels Landing Trail toward the north side, falling several hundred feet into Zion Canyon near Big Bend. The individual did not

survive the fall. The individual's body was recovered that evening. The incident is under investigation by the Washington County (UT) Sheriff's Office and the NPS. Source: [The Salt Lake Tribune](#), [Zion National Park](#)

On April 22, a 43-year-old was hiking and rock scrambling in an off-trail location near Spry Canyon when they took a "low-level accidental fall." The individual was found unresponsive by other hikers, who called for emergency assistance and began CPR. They continued CPR for 30 minutes until NPS staff and Search and Rescue members arrived to the scene. Resuscitation efforts were unsuccessful, and the individual was pronounced deceased at the scene. The individual's body was transported to the Utah Medical Examiner's Office for an autopsy. Source: [St. George News](#)

Wildfires

- *Big Cypress National Preserve* - On April 3, the Hilux Fire was reported, located north of I-75 and east of State Road 29, near Bear Island Campground. Local closures are in place, including Bear Island, Gator Head, and Pink Jeep Campgrounds. As of April 12, the Hilux Fire was 420 acres and 35% contained, with 99 personnel assigned. Source: [Big Cypress National Preserve](#), [Western Fire Chiefs](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area* - On April 17, the park announced the opening of roads in the Yellowtail Habitat area after a closure due to the Kane Fire (see [4/15/26 Coalition Report](#)). Hazardous trees were cleared through a cooperative effort of the NPS, U.S. Forest Service, and Wyoming Game and Fish. Visitors are reminded to remain cautious due to standing trees that may be weakened and could become fall hazards during weather events. Source: [Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - On April 17, the park began "gradually" easing water conservation measures, following "recent progress in repairing" the Transcanyon Waterline. Water spigots at Mather Campground and Desert View Campground remain turned off. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)
- *Lake Chelan National Recreation Area* - On April 13, the NPS announced the award of a construction contract to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to reconstruct an interim Company Creek Road, which was damaged in December 2025 floods (see [12/24/25](#), [2/18/26](#), and [3/18/26 Coalition Reports](#)). Work began the week of April 13 and "is expected to last a few weeks." Source: [North Cascades National Park](#)

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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.

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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