



The Coalition Report

Wednesday, February 4, 2026

Coalition Actions

The Coalition joined the National Parks Conservation Association and American Battlefield Trust in [a letter](#) to the Appomattox County (VA) Board of Supervisors about a proposed rifle range near Appomattox Courthouse National Historical Park, and the subsequent effects of noise pollution on the visitor experience. The letter requests efforts to dampen sound and to conduct noise modeling.

We joined 153 other conservation organization in [a letter](#) to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources opposing the nomination of Stevan Pearce as the director of the Bureau of Land Management due to his record of supporting the sell off of public lands, conflicts of interest with the oil and gas industry, and his efforts to undermine the Antiquities Act.

The Coalition joined several dozen other conservation groups in submitting [comments](#) to the Bureau of Ocean Management's 11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program, arguing it conflicts with existing law and is environmentally reckless.

We joined seven groups in submitting [a letter](#) to the Bureau of Land Management on its Direct Final Rule (DFR) for the extension of a phase-in deadline on federal onshore oil and gas statewide bonds, arguing that the use of a DFR violates the Administrative Procedure Act, and that the BLM has failed to provide a legal basis for delaying compliance.

We continue to provide statements and interviews to the media highlighting challenges to the National Park System. Recent work includes:

- [Senate must reject House bill that would open up one of America's most treasured landscapes to mining](#), press release
- [Erasing history doesn't make it go away, it just makes it more likely to repeat itself](#), press

release

- [National park signs related to Native Americans, climate change to be removed](#), *The Washington Post*

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.

- *Exhibit censorship* - The NPS has removed several dozen interpretive exhibits across the National Park System featuring content that “disparage[s] Americans past or living,” including one about George Washington’s ownership of slaves at Independence National Historical Park (see more below in “Incidents”). Source: [The Washington Post](#)
- *NPS communications restructuring* - The last week in January, an email was sent to all NPS public communications staff, stating that all content for websites and social media “must be completed by a DOI-Office of Communications staff person unless it is urgently life/health/safety related.” It stated that an “NPS Digital Content Management and Governance Tiger Team” has been established, who will review all digital content needs. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *NPS budget breakdown* - The National Parks Conservation Association published [an article](#) breaking down the new NPS budget and its ramifications. Source: *National Parks Conservation Association*
- *Low morale from new employee evaluations* - *The Intercept* published [an article](#) documenting effects on morale among NPS staff related to the new performance review guidance, which encourages supervisors to limit the number of 4s and 5s (on a 1-5 scale) given to staff. In some cases, employees who had already received their annual ratings were downgraded, while in others, 3s were given unilaterally across all staff. Source: *The Intercept*
- *Grizzly bear ESA decision delayed* - On January 30, a federal judge approved a request by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to delay a decision about whether grizzly bears still require Endangered Species Act protections. The deadline has been moved to December. Source: [E&E News](#)
- *GAO report on Tribal agreements* - On January 28, the Government Accountability Office published a report analyzing shared decision-making agreements with Tribes, identifying features that strengthen them or impede them. The report makes several recommendations to Congress, including authorizing the U.S. Forest Service and the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries to enter into self-governance agreements with Tribes and addressing skill gaps in the federal workforce related to agreements. Source: [U.S. Government Accountability Office](#)

- *Project 2025's effects on public lands* - The Center for Western Priorities published [a report](#) evaluating 70 directives from Project 2025, a conservative political roadmap produced by The Heritage Foundation, showing that 50% of its directives related to public lands have been implemented, and another 34% are in progress. 15% of their priorities have not yet been attempted. Source: [VailDaily](#)

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Carlsbad Caverns National Park* - The American Association for State and Local History published [an article](#) documenting the artistic works of Will Shuster, who made 12 paintings of Carlsbad Caverns as a Works Progress Administration artist in the 1930s. Several of those works are unaccounted for, and the Carlsbad Museum is attempting to find them before the park's centennial anniversary in 2030. Source: *American Association for State and Local History*
- *Colonial National Historical Park* - In Fall 2025, a five-person Student Conservation Association crew, in collaboration with NPS staff, aligned, leveled, and reset 617 headstones at Yorktown National Cemetery, exceeding their goal of 500. The work preserves the headstones to honor the memory of those interred, and has also improved access. The project was funded by the National Park Foundation. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve* - On January 22, ten conservation groups filed an amended and supplemental complaint challenging the approval of permits for the proposed Ambler Road, which would cross Gates of the Arctic and have ecological consequences for other NPS units and public lands in the greater region. The filing claims that the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers acted beyond their legal authority and did not comply with the Alaska National Interest Lands Claims Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Clean Water Act, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. Source: [Center for Biological Diversity](#)
- *George Washington Memorial Parkway* - On January 16, the Virginia State General Assembly made a resolution commending the Friends of Dyke Marsh for 50 years of support for the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve. Source: [Virginia State Legislative Information System](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - On January 22, the NPS and Blackfeet Community College signed a Memorandum of Agreement to "foster mutual educational, cultural, and professional benefits." Source: [Flathead Beacon](#)
- *Great Sand Dunes National Park* - On January 30, the NPS announced a Commercial Use Authorization process to provide vended beverages, firewood, and ice at the Piñon Flats

Campground. Source: [Great Sand Dunes National Park](#)

- *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park* - The park recently released [a new StoryMap](#), highlighting the legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the park. Source: [Big Island Video News](#)
- *Joshua Tree National Park, Mojave National Preserve* - The National Parks Conservation Association published [an article](#) about the ongoing efforts of Cadiz, Inc., to pursue a groundwater mining project in Mojave Trails National Monument (managed by the Bureau of Land Management). Multiple studies supported by the NPS and U.S. Geological Survey have shown that the project would deplete the Mojave Desert's aquifer, with far-reaching ecological consequences for the region. Source: *National Parks Conservation Association*
- *Olympic National Park* - *The Revelator* published [an article](#) about the challenges to habitat restoration on the Elwha River due to staff and funding cuts at the park. The park's fisheries team has "dropped from five staff at the beginning of the second Trump administration to one intern by the start of this year." Source: *The Revelator*
- *Padre Island National Seashore* - The Autonomy Research Institute at Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi and Texas State Aquarium, in partnership with the NPS, has begun to deploy drones at Bird Island Basin to locate cold-stunned turtles. The drones can stream live video, greatly accelerating retrieval and treatment. Source: [KRIS](#)
- *Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program* (an NPS-administered program) - The NPS helped the community of Glide, Oregon, develop the Glide Gateway and North Umpqua Corridor Outdoor Recreation Conceptual Framework for Priority Projects. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - On January 27, the Colorado Geographic Naming Advisory Board declined to consider a name change to Longs Peak, proposed by a Colorado attorney. The recommendation will next go to the governor and the U.S. Bureau on Geographic Names, who are also expected to decline a name change. Source: [The Colorado Sun](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - On January 27, the park announced that it will close Timber Creek Campground on August 10 for a sewer system rehabilitation project. The project is expected to reopen for the 2027 summer season. Source: [Rocky Mountain National Park](#)
- *Shenandoah National Park* - On February 2, the park began a project to apply limestone sand to a 450-acre area to reduce acidity on Meadow Run, a stream near mile 90 on Skyline Drive. The contract is being executed by Helicopter Applicators, Inc., of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, with a subcontract to Summit Helicopters, Inc., of Salem, Virginia. The project will continue through February 28. The Rip Rap-Wildcat backcountry area will be closed for the entire project period, and intermittent closures of Skyline Drive will be in place. The project is being funded through settlements for Clean Air Act

Violations. Source: [Shenandoah National Park](#)

- *Yellowstone National Park* - The *Cowboy State Daily* published [an article](#) about a 100-year-old stamp still offered to visitors for their park “passports,” commemorating Old Faithful. Source: *Cowboy State Daily*
- *Yellowstone National Park* - Along the northern rim of the Yellowstone Caldera near Gibbon Falls, an area about 10-miles in diameter has risen an inch since July. This type of deformation is not uncommon in the region, and scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey are monitoring the change. Scientists do not believe that an eruption is likely. Source: [Cowboy State Daily](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - In August and September 2025, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided a Maintenance Action Team to support the reconstruction of a retaining wall above the community of El Portal, California (an administrative site for the park). The project was completed in six weeks with a rotating crew of 30 people. Source: [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - *The New York Times* published [an article](#) about challenges to the park associated with low staffing. Source: *The New York Times*

Personnel Changes

- *National Parks Conservation Association* - Tiernan Sittenfeld was selected as the new president and CEO of the organization. Tiernan comes to the NPCA after over 20 years working at the League of Conservation Voters. She will start her new role on March 1. Source: [National Parks Conservation Association](#)

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

- James “Kevin” Ambrose, 70, passed away on January 18. Kevin worked in Yosemite National Park for a time. Source: [Legacy/Farewell Funeral Service - Palm Bluffs](#)
- John W. Bond, 92, passed away on November 11, 2025. John worked for the NPS for many years, including as assistant regional director in the Mid-Atlantic Region and at “various historical sites across the country.” Source: [Legacy/Bradley Funeral Home - Marlton](#)
- Donald “Don” Cote, 95, passed away on January 14. Don worked for the NPS at Acadia

National Park for a time, starting in 1975. Source: [Bar Harbor Story](#)

- John Jacob Frye, 79, passed away on January 13. John worked for the NPS for 30 years, including time at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Lincoln Memorial, Manassas National Battlefield Park, Prince William Forest Park, Great Falls Park, Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine, and George Washington Birthplace National Monument. In 2000, he received the Northeast Region Interpretive Management Award. Source: [Daily Press](#)
- Georgina Jacquez passed away recently. She worked for the NPS at Tumacacori National Historical Park for a time. Source: Nicholas Bleser
- Daryl Jennings passed away on January 21. Daryl worked at Yellowstone National Park from 1976-1980 as a fisheries biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. After his career retirement in 2005, he volunteered with the NPS at Yellowstone, “filming, developing and producing podcasts.” Source: [Legacy/Champion Kane Funeral Home](#)
- Craig Ridgway Kerr, 88, passed away on January 22. Craig spent a summer after college working for the NPS at Rocky Mountain National Park. Source: [Franklin County Free Press](#)
- Thomas “Tom” L. Larson, 59, passed away on January 14. Tom worked at Virgin Islands National Park for a time. Source: [Legacy/Oak Ridge Funeral Care - Haines City](#)
- Brenda Gail McCollough, 78, passed away on January 20. Brenda worked at Cumberland Island National Seashore for 13 years. Source: [Legacy/Tribune and Georgian](#)
- Annabeth Elizabeth Palacios, 86, passed away on January 18. Annabeth worked at Yellowstone National Park for two summers. Source: [Dignity](#)

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.

- *Cumberland Island National Seashore* - Public comment is [open through February 6](#) on a visitor use management plan, which would increase daily visitation and camping capacity, add two beachfront pavilions, add backcountry campsites, allow for on-island retail and kayak/canoe rental, and establish bicycle access. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *George Washington Memorial Parkway* - Public comment is [open through February 12](#) on a proposed plan for improvements near the Old Town North neighborhood of Alexandria, Virginia, including new trail connections to the Mount Vernon Trail, more access to the Potomac River, more public space, and transportation upgrades. Source: [George Washington Memorial Parkway](#)

- *Memphis Area Lynching Sites Special Resource Study* - Public comment is [open through April 3](#) on a Special Resource Study of eight sites in Tennessee for possible inclusion in the National Park System. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - Public comment is [open through March 5](#) on a development concept plan for Tidal Basin, including a vehicle barrier system around the Jefferson Memorial. Source: [National Mall and Memorial Parks](#)
- *St. Croix National Scenic Riverway* - Public comment is [open through February 21](#) on a comprehensive river management plan. Source: [St. Croix National Scenic Riverway](#)
- *Whiskeytown National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through February 21](#) on a proposal to rebuild Whiskeytown Environmental School, which was destroyed in the 2018 Carr Fire. Source: [Record Searchlight](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - The NPS and the Federal Highway Administration have opened [public comment through February 4](#) on a proposal to reconstruct a new permanent North Entrance Road to recover from the 500-year flood event in June 2022. A temporary road has been in place since October 2022, and a more permanent solution is needed. Source: [Yellowstone National Park](#)

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

January 23 - Public Law 119–74, the Commerce, Justice, Science; Energy and Water Development; and Interior and Environment Appropriations Act, 2026, was signed, making consolidated appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026 (H.R. 6938).

Specifically, the Act includes 3 of the 12 regular FY2026 appropriations bills:

- the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2026;
- the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2026; and
- the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2026. This included appropriations for the National Park Service (see details in the [1/21/26 Coalition Report](#)).

Senate Actions

The Senate took no actions specific to the NPS during this period. The Senate was in recess January 20-23.

House of Representatives Actions

January 22 - The Committee on Natural Resources held a markup on several bills including three of specific interest to The National Park Service/System:

- H.R. 5254, the “Gateway Partnership Act of 2025,” 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. The Gateway Arch Park Foundation, a nonprofit organization, serves as the official philanthropic partner of the Park.
- H.R. 5729, the “North Rim Restoration Act of 2025,” would authorize direct emergency acquisition flexibilities for the National Park Service for the purpose of retaining, vetting, approving, and expediting contractor approval for the clearing, rebuilding, maintenance, and improvement of the Grand Canyon grounds that have been impacted by the Dragon Bravo Fire.
- H.R. 6365, the “Wintergreen Emergency Egress Act,” would require the Secretary of the Interior to issue a right-of-way for an emergency exit on certain National Park Service land along the Blue Ridge Parkway in the state of Virginia. The right-of-way is generally depicted as “Proposed Egress” on the map entitled “Blue Ridge Parkway, Proposed Wintergreen Emergency Egress Near Milepost 9.6,” numbered 601/194,694, and dated September 2024.

The House of Representatives was not in session from January 23 through 30.

Other Relevant Department of the Interior News

- *\$20 million for wildfire slip-on tankers*- On February 2, the Department of the Interior announced \$20 million in grants for local governments to convert trucks to slip-on tanker units for wildland firefighting. Grant applications are due March 23. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

Incidents

Listed alphabetically by park/program.

Many parks

Winter storms

Unseasonably cold winter storms the week of January 23 caused many parks across the Eastern United States to close temporarily.

Acadia National Park

Body recovery

On January 28, the Bar Harbor Police Department received report of a 24-year-old believed to be stranded on Bar Island. Personnel from the NPS, U.S. Coast Guard, Maine Warden Service,

Maine Marine Patrol, and Maine Association of Search and Rescue responded. They were unable to locate the individual upon arrival, and conducted an overnight search, including canine resources. The following morning, the individual was located deceased. No further information was given about the individual's circumstances. Source: [Acadia National Park](#)

Colonial National Historical Park

Cold murder case solved

The Federal Bureau of Investigation recently used DNA evidence to identify a suspect for the murder of a 21-year-old and 27-year-old in 1986 on the Colonial Parkway. Advances in DNA technology were utilized on one of the victim's articles of clothing to identify Alan Wade Wilmer, Sr., as the suspect. He died in 2017 and had been previously connected to "at least six murders and disappearances of young people in Colonial Parkway between 1986 and 1989." Source: [WAVY](#)

Cumberland Island National Seashore

Hunter fatality

On January 8, a 52-year-old was shot by another individual while they were hunting for hogs as part of a managed hunt. Personnel from the NPS and "local and state partners" responded, and the individual was transported off the island to a local hospital. They passed away from their injuries. The incident is under investigation by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Incident Reconstruction Team. Source: [The Current](#)

Cuyahoga Valley National Park

Missing person found deceased

On January 16, an abandoned car was found at Brandywine Falls trailhead after a snowstorm. A search for the owner, a 42-year-old, was enacted. The individual was found deceased in the area on January 24. No foul play is suspected. Source: [Akron Beacon Journal](#)

Death Valley National Park

Off-road vehicle damage

On December 17, an individual illegally drove off-road onto the Eureka Dunes, leaving five miles of tracks. The tracks were discovered by an NPS employee on December 26. A subsequent survey found that 74 plants were damaged or destroyed, including a shining milkvetch found only on sand dunes in the park. On January 27, the park released images of the vehicle. Officials are requesting any information the public can provide. Source: [SFGate](#) ([1/14](#), [1/28](#)), [Death Valley National Park](#)

George Washington Birthplace National Monument

Bird flu

On January 22, the park announced that a juvenile bald eagle found deceased at the park on

January 4 was found to have a “presumptive positive case of avian influenza.” Samples have been forwarded to the Department of Agriculture National Veterinary Services Laboratories for confirmatory testing. Visitors have been asked to report any sightings of sick or dead animals, and to keep a safe distance from all wildlife. Source: [George Washington Birthplace National Monument](#)

Independence National Historical Park

Exhibit removal halted

On February 1, a federal court judge ordered the NPS to make no further changes to the President’s House, after an exhibit about nine enslaved people who served George Washington’s household was removed by the Trump administration. The exhibit is being held in storage at the National Constitution Center. There are other parts of the site that include mentions of slavery and civil rights that have been ordered to remain “until further order of the court.” The City of Philadelphia brought the lawsuit, arguing that an agreement signing the intellectual property rights of the exhibit from the City to the NPS did not include authority to alter or destroy the exhibit. In initial testimony, an assistant U.S. attorney stated that “the government gets to choose the message it wants to convey.” The judge responded, “That is a dangerous statement you are making. It is horrifying to listen to.” Source: [The New York Times](#), [E&E News](#), [Associated Press](#)

Joshua Tree National Park

Earthquakes

On January 19, a 4.9-magnitude earthquake hit the Joshua Tree National Park area, followed by over 200 smaller aftershocks into January 20. No damage was reported. Source: [SFGate](#)

Mount Rainier National Park

Climber fatalities

On January 18, two climbers were reported overdue, with their emergency contacts reporting they had not been in contact since the day prior. Park staff found their vehicle in the Paradise parking lot, and used spotting scopes to observe two non-ambulatory individuals near the Wilson Glacier. On January 20, ground teams reached the location and confirmed that both individuals were deceased. Their bodies were recovered and transported to the Pierce County (WA) Medical Examiner’s Office. Source: [Mount Rainier National Park](#)

Yosemite National Park

Vandalism

On January 25, an Instagram user posted a video showing that a rock, door, and informational sign at Bridalveil Fall had graffiti on them, reading “Yeti.” Source: [Fresno Bee](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - Further details were released related to the missing

person whose truck was found stuck on the beach in the park (see [1/21/25 Coalition Report](#)). On January 16, a 39-year-old was reported missing by Arkansas authorities. A review of traffic camera footage found that the individual's truck traveled through Dare County, North Carolina, on January 9, and it had a kayak in the bed. Cell phone records indicated they were near Avon on January 10 and near Cape Point in Buxton on January 11. On January 12, NPS staff found the vehicle stuck on the beach, but the kayak was not in the vehicle and has not been found since. The individual was also presumed to be traveling with their German shepherd. The park is asking the public for any information they can provide. Source: [Cape Hatteras National Seashore](#)

- *Death Valley National Park* - On January 31, the park reopened South Badwater Road for the first time since it closed in August 2025 due to flash flood damage. The road is open, but may have missing pavement, loose gravel, eroding shoulders, and short drop-offs at the pavement. Visitors are encouraged to exercise caution. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - On March 4, the North Kaibab Trail will reopen, from the Clear Creek junction to the Ribbon Falls junction, for the first time since the Dragon Bravo Fire closed the trail on July 13, 2025. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)
- *Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites* - On January 28, an appeal was filed in the lawsuit against the NPS for its cashless policy. The case had been dismissed by a federal judge in November 2025 (see [12/10/25 Coalition Report](#)). Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Point Reyes National Seashore* - On January 27, a federal judge dismissed a lawsuit brought by ranch workers and other tenants against the NPS and the Nature Conservancy (see [3/5/25 Coalition Report](#)). Under a 2025 settlement, 12 of the 14 ranches remaining in the park will surrender their leases in exchange for ~\$30 million, funded by the Nature Conservancy, leaving their employees and tenants without housing. The plaintiffs have stated they plan to refile within the 60-day window. Source: [Point Reyes Light](#)

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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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