



The Coalition Report

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Coalition Actions

The Coalition submitted comments to the [National Capital Planning Commission](#) and the [U.S. Commission of Fine Arts](#), arguing that White House additions should match the existing architectural features and adjacent buildings in look and scale.

We joined 14 conservation organizations and the Southern Environmental Law Center in submitting [comments](#) on the Cumberland Island National Seashore visitor use management plan, expressing serious concerns about exponentially increased ferry visitation, the expansion of e-bikes and commercial services, impacts to federal wilderness, the removal of protection of sensitive species, and other issues.

The Coalition joined several partners in submitting [comments](#) to the Bureau of Land Management Wyoming Office for its 2026 Third Quarter Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale, with concerns about the “national energy emergency” justification for bypassing National Environmental Policy Act procedures, concerns about outdated Resource Management Plans, and a variety of environmental threats to wildlife and global climate change.

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

- [Reservation systems protect national parks for the future](#), press release
- [Former national park leaders sound the alarm on Steve Pearce’s nomination to lead Bureau of Land Management](#), press release
- [Yosemite had a reservation system for good reasons, all of which are still valid](#), op-ed by Coalition Executive Council member Don Neubacher
- [An imminent threat to Virginia’s hallowed ground](#), op-ed by Coalition Executive Council chair Cheryl Schreier

- [Timed entry is out at Arches. Locals and conservationists wonder what's next](#), *KUER*
- [There's a better way to visit crowded national parks](#), *The Washington Post*
- [Senate should reject unqualified national park nominees](#), *Bangor Daily News*, op-ed by Coalition Member Michael Soukup

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.

- *Censorship database leaked* - *The Washington Post* obtained access to an NPS database documenting all of the interpretive products across the National Park System that have been flagged for review and potential censorship. They published [an article](#) on their findings, including many examples of signs and exhibits that have not been previously published. Source: *The Washington Post*
- *Reservation systems jettisoned* - On February 18, the NPS announced that they will rescind visitation reservation systems for Summer 2026 at Arches, Glacier, Rocky Mountain, and Yosemite National Parks, citing access as the primary reason. On February 25, Mount Rainier National Park also announced it will not have a reservation system this summer. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#), [SFGate](#)
- *Op-ed about overcrowding at parks* - *Aeon* published [an essay](#) by John Lemons, who documents the tension between the NPS' mandate to both conserve and provide access, arguing that crowding and commercialization of the parks intrude on the values individuals seek within them. Source: *Aeon*

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Big Bend National Park* - A U.S. Customs and Border Protection map shows that a steel border wall will be built in the park, as well as Big Bend Ranch State Park, Texas' largest state park. On February 17, the Department of Homeland Security issued a notice that it will waive 28 laws to build the wall (see Coronado National Memorial entry below). DHS notes that the Big Bend area is "an area of high illegal entry," though CBP data conflicts with their statement. Construction is expected to be complete by early 2028, though no start date has been publicized. Source: [Gear Junkie](#)
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - On February 26, the NPS announced the selection of Price Lake Boat Rentals, Inc., for a 10-year concession contract providing visitor services on Price Lake. The company has held the concession since 2013. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - Around March 9, the NPS will close the parkway from Milepost 86 to

89, near Bedford, Virginia, for a rehabilitation project. The work is expected to be complete this summer. A signed detour will be in place during the project. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)

- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - This week, the NPS, in partnership with Outer Banks Forever, will begin a project to restore the interior of the Bodie Island Double Keepers' Quarters and install new exhibits. An electrical fire damaged the building on January 7, 2025, and it has been closed ever since. Source: [Cape Hatteras National Seashore](#)
- *Castillo de San Marcos National Monument* - On February 19, the NPS announced a Finding of No Significant Impact for a project to raise and rehabilitate failing seawalls at the park. Source: [Castillo de San Marcos National Monument](#)
- *Coronado National Memorial* - SFGate published an article about the federal government's efforts to continue building a border wall through public lands, including using dynamite to blast a trench within Coronado in early December. The construction activities are exempt from environmental review due to the 2005 Real ID Act. Source: [SFGate](#)
- *Cumberland Gap National Historical Park* - In late February, the park began a project to replace the Little Yellow Creek Bridge on Bartlett Park Road and to repair a culvert on Pinnacle Park Road. The road and areas south of the bridge, including Marsee Cemetery, will not be accessible during construction. No end date was given for the project. Source: [Cumberland Gap National Historical Park](#)
- *Death Valley National Park* - The park is currently experiencing a superbloom of wildflowers for the first time since 2016 after a record rainfall in Fall 2025. Source: [Sunset](#)
- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area* - On February 27, the park announced efforts to maintain visitor access during projected low water levels this summer. Long-term ramp projects are planned for Antelope Point Public, Stanton Creek at Bullfrog, and Hite North, but they are not expected to be complete in time for Summer 2026. The park will, however, extend the Stateline Auxiliary Ramp and a temporary ramp at North Wash in the Hite area. Source: [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#)
- *Manassas National Battlefield Park* - On February 24, the Virginia Court of Appeals heard arguments regarding the proposed data center project adjacent to the park (and in the footprint of the original battlefield). The project is proposed to be the biggest data center complex in the nation, and the NPS has actively opposed it. The Prince William County (VA) Board of Supervisors approved the project in 2023 after a contentious 27-hour hearing. The project is being litigated by the American Battlefield Trust and 12 residents whose homes abut the project. A court has thus far ruled in favor of the plaintiffs that the county failed to publicize the public hearing in accordance with state and county laws. Other lawsuits regarding the project's impact on historic sites are pending. [Editor note: *The Coalition has actively spoken out against the data center project throughout its development, including an op-ed found above in "Coalition Actions".*] Source: [E&E News](#)

- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - A February 3 NPS memo calls for the display of a statue of U.S. founding father Caesar Rodney in Freedom Plaza to celebrate the United States' 250th anniversary as a nation. The statue was removed from public land in Wilmington, Delaware, in 2020 because of Caesar's role owning several hundred enslaved people. Source: [Seattle Times](#)
- *Reconstruction Era National Historic Network* (an NPS-administered program) - On March 2, the NPS announced the addition of The Institute for the Study of the Reconstruction Era at USC Beaufort and Selma University to the network. Source: [Reconstruction Era National Historical Park](#)
- *The White House and President's Park* - On February 20, the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts unanimously approved the White House ballroom expansion. The six members of the committee were appointed by President Donald Trump. Source: [The Architect's Newspaper](#)
- *Theodore Roosevelt National Park* - From June 28 to July 10, Cottonwood and Horse Roundup Campgrounds will close to the public to accommodate visitors and staff for "a special America 250th anniversary event." Source: [Theodore Roosevelt National Park](#)
- *Vicksburg National Military Park* - On March 2, the park closed the section of the Tour Road that provides access to Tour Stops 2 and 3 (Shirley House and Third Louisiana Redan) to support the restoration of the Illinois Memorial. The project is expected to be complete by September 2026. Source: [Vicksburg National Military Park](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - On February 7, Echinus Geyser, the world's largest acidic geyser, began erupting after being dormant for over five years. Source: [CBS News](#)

Personnel Changes

- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - Charles "Charlie" Sellars was selected to be the park's new superintendent. Charlie has served as acting superintendent at the park for over a year, and has previously served as the deputy chief of facility management at Great Smoky Mountains. He has over 40 years of NPS experience. Source: [The Mountaineer, Knox 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

- Donald “Don” David Anderson, 83, passed away on February 16. Don worked as a seasonal ranger at Olympic National Park for several summers. Source: [The Register-Guard](#)
- Eileen Berube Narraway Bergmann, 83, passed away on February 9. Eileen volunteered “for a short time” at Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Source: [Akron Beacon Journal](#)
- William Eugene Cox, 83, passed away on February 16. William worked for the NPS for many years, including Everglades National Park, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and the Midwest Regional Office, retiring in 1998. Source: [The Coalfield Progress](#)
- Gerald John Gray, Sr., 84, passed away on February 10. Gerald worked as a “summer ranger” at Glacier National Park in his retirement. Source: [Statesman Journal](#)
- James “Jim” Robert Schwoebel, 78, passed away on February 24. Jim and his partner Sue spent two summers “working at the Old Faithful General Store in Yellowstone National Park.” Source: [Butler Radio](#)

In the News

- Lisa Hendy will serve as the keynote speaker for the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga’s Women’s History Month events. Lisa retired in December 2025 after 30 years of work at the NPS, mostly in law enforcement. Source: [The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga](#)

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.

- *Capitol Reef National Park* - Public comment is [open through April 3](#) on a plan to improve visitor access and circulation in the park. Source: [Capitol Reef National Park](#)
- *Canaveral National Seashore* - Public comment is [open through March 13](#) on a storm adaptive management plan for the Playalinda Beach district. Source: [Canaveral National Seashore](#)
- *Curecanti National Recreation Area* - Public comment is [open through April 1](#) on a proposal to replace the water and wastewater systems at Elk Creek Marina and Campground and Lake Fork Marina and Campground. Source: [Curecanti National Recreation Area](#)
- *George Washington Memorial Parkway* - Public comment is [open through March 16](#) on a proposed amendment to the Glen Echo Park 2001 management plan to identify areas for future development, remove several existing structures to open space for events, improve

accessibility and stormwater management, and better protect cultural and natural resources. Source: [George Washington Memorial Parkway](#)

- *Los Angeles Coastal Area Special Resource Study* - Public comment is [open through April 6](#) on a Special Resource Study of the Los Angeles coast for possible inclusion in the National Park System. Source: [National Parks Traveler](#)
- *Mammoth Cave National Park* - Public comment is [open through April 10](#) on a proposal to allow bicycle use on 37 miles of multi-use trails in the park and allow horse riding on the Houchin Ferry North/Ollie Road. Source: [Blue Ridge Outdoors](#)
- *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 Capital Parks - East* - Public comment is [open through March 27](#) on a proposal to extend Suitland Parkway Trail and make intersection improvements to support safety and connectivity. Source: [National Capital Parks - East](#)
- *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](#)
- *The White House and President's Park* - The National Capital Planning Commission has opened [public comment through March 4](#) on the East Wing Modernization Project, including the proposed construction of a 90,000-square-foot ballroom. Source: [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#)
- *Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve* - Public comment is [open through April 1](#) on a proposal to relocate the Fort Caroline National Memorial to an upland location out of the floodplain. Source: [Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve](#)
- *Voyageurs National Park* - Public comment is [open through March 10](#) on a proposal to replace a power line in the Kettle Falls area to remedy power outage issues. Source: [Voyageurs 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

Nothing to report.

Senate Actions

February 25 - The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources concluded a hearing to examine three nominations (including that of Stevan Pearce, of New Mexico, to be Director of the Bureau of Land Management) after the nominees testified and answered questions in their own behalf. (Editor note: Source NM gave a succinct [summary](#) of the hearing.)

House of Representatives Actions

February 23 - A Report was filed on H.R. 6365, the “Wintergreen Emergency Egress Act,” which 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.

February 24 - Reports were filed on:

- H.R. 1945, to designate the America's National Churchill Museum National Historic Landmark, and to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a Special Resource Study to determine the eligibility of the Landmark in Fulton, Missouri, on the grounds of Westminster College, to be a unit of the National Park System;
- H.R. 2196, to provide for an extension of the legislative authority of the National Emergency Medical Services Memorial Foundation to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs, with an amendment.

Other Relevant Department of the Interior News

- *NEPA reform* - On February 23, the Department of the Interior announced a Final Rule reaffirming the “rescission of approximately 80% of Interior’s prior NEPA regulations,” arguing it has created regulatory burdens that block progress. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Alaska region opened to resource extraction* - On February 20, the Department of the Interior announced the issue of Public Land Order 7966, revoking previous public land orders and opening 2.1 million acres of Bureau of Land Management lands along the Dalton Highway and Trans-Alaska Pipeline in Alaska to being open to State selection. This is a process by which the State of Alaska can select parcels to be subjects to mining and exclude them from federal rural subsistence priority. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Expanded mining authority in WV* - On February 18, the Department of the Interior signed an amendment to a cooperative agreement with the State of West Virginia, giving it expanded authority to regulate coal mining and reclamation on Bureau of Land Management lands within its borders. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *State of Union* - During the State of the Union address President Donald Trump discussed his administration’s focus on “energy dominance,” accessing critical minerals, fighting wildland fires, and making Washington, “D.C. safe and beautiful.” Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

- *Progress against invasive species* - On February 27, the Department of the Interior released a report highlighting five years of progress in controlling the spread of invasive species “building on a strategy launched in President Trump’s first term.” Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

Incidents

Listed alphabetically by park/program.

Big Cypress National Preserve

Wildfire

On February 22, two fires were discovered in the park. The Grand Fire, estimated at under 5 acres, was located north of Interstate 75 and was documented to have “limited spread potential.” The National Fire, located south of I-75 and east of State Road 29, has burned 30,225 acres, is 0% contained, and has 154 personnel assigned, as of February 27. Several areas of the park are currently closed. Source: *Big Cypress National Preserve* ([2/23](#), [2/26](#), [2/27](#))

Bryce Canyon National Park

Mudslides

On February 26, rapid snowmelt caused mudslides and rockfall in the park, causing it to close the Two Bridges Trail. Source: [Bryce Canyon National Park \(Facebook\)](#)

Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park

Visitor fatality

On February 20, an individual was found deceased at Sunset Rock. The individual’s body was recovered utilizing technical rope rescue techniques. Agencies involved in the incident included the NPS, Lookout Mountain (GA) Police and Fire, Hamilton County (TN) Sheriff’s Office, Hamilton County Cave and Cliff Technical Rescue, Chattanooga Police Department, Hamilton County EMS, and the Hamilton County Medical Examiner. Authorities have stated that no foul play is suspected. No further details about the incident were released. Source: [Local 3 News](#)

Death Valley National Park

Protests over Tribal censorship

On January 30, over 50 Timbisha Shoshone Tribal members and supporters marched down Highway 190 in Furnace Creek to the visitor center to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the passage of the Timbisha Shoshone Homeland Act, which returned ancestral land to the Tribe and provided other provisions. The march also served as a protest against the recent censorship review of a pending visitor center exhibit that seeks to change the phrasing, “This is our Homeland.” Source: [KNPR](#)

Grand Canyon National Park

Rafting fatality

On February 19, a 30-year-old on a noncommercial rafting trip entered the Colorado River at the top of Hance Rapid at River Mile 77. The individual became unresponsive. Other members from their group pulled them out of the water and began CPR. NPS staff were also flown to the location by helicopter. Resuscitation efforts were unsuccessful. The NPS and Coconino County (AZ) Medical Examiner are investigating the incident. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Hiker rescue

On February 25, a hiker with cold weather injuries requested emergency evacuation from the Double Springs Gap Shelter. A Tennessee Army National Guard helicopter responded and performed a hoist rescue to extract the individual. They were flown to the University of Tennessee Medical Center in Knoxville. Source: [Local 3 News](#)

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

Visitor fatality

On February 26, a 33-year-old entered a closed area on the east side of Kīlauea caldera. Search and rescue personnel conducted operations overnight and found the individual the following morning. They were airlifted to Hilo Benioff Medical Center, where they were pronounced deceased. The volcano was not erupting at the time of the incident. No further details about the incident were released, though the park included a reminder to be aware of unstable cliff edges and volcanic features in its press release on the incident. Source: [Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park](#)

Yellowstone National Park

Oil spill settlement

On February 9, the federal government reached a settlement for \$3.5 million with Andreas Petroleum for an August 2020 incident in which a semi-truck driving on the Grand Loop Road near Cascade Picnic Area rolled over and punctured, releasing 3,100 gallons of unleaded gasoline over a grassy area and the Yellowstone River. The road was closed for over a week, with cleanup taking close to a month. Contamination from the spill can still be detected in testing today, five years later, and remediation is ongoing. The settlement covers the response costs and related damages. Source: [Bozeman Daily Chronicle](#)

Yosemite National Park

Firefall gridlock

Over Presidents Day weekend (February 14-16), thousands of visitors visited the park to see the Firefall phenomenon, in which a waterfall on El Capitan lights up bright red under the right conditions. For several years, the park has instituted a reservation system to get into the park

during the week of the Firefall. However, this year, the park did not have a reservation system. The result was gridlocked traffic, full and delayed buses, and many visitors stuck in the cold while waiting for shuttle space. Parking in Yosemite Valley was full by early afternoon all weekend. NPS staff utilized park vehicles to serve as ad hoc warming stations for underdressed visitors. Source: [SFGate](#)

Yosemite National Park

Storm evacuation

From February 16-18, Curry Village and all campgrounds in the park closed due to high wind alerts and snow. Concession staff living in soft-sided cabins in Curry Village were given accommodations on the floor of the cafeteria. Source: [SFGate](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Grand Canyon National Park* - The NPS recently released its executive summary of the impacts of the 2025 Dragon Bravo Fire on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon, documenting effects on structures and the environment, and calling for emergency stabilization treatments to address immediate risks to water, safety, and historic structures. Source: [KNAU](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - On February 23, the ranger fired after flying a transgender pride flag on El Capitan during non-work time in August 2025 (see [9/3/25 Coalition Report](#)) filed a lawsuit against the Department of the Interior. The lawsuit argues that the action violated their First Amendment rights to freedom of speech. In addition to be fired, the individual was told they are “under active investigation” and that the incident is a “criminal matter.” Source: [SFGate](#)

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- Regular Correspondent: Chris Soller
- Issue Contributors: Dennis Burnett, Jin Harlow, Steve Hastings, Mike Murray, Bill Walters

If you see something that might be of interest to Coalition members, send it to:
report@protectnps.org.

The Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks is a non-profit organization of past and current NPS employees and their allies that studies, educates, speaks, and acts for the preservation and protection of the National Park System and mission-related programs of the National Park Service.

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