



The Coalition Report

Wednesday, May 27, 2026

Coalition Actions

Seven former superintendents and deputy superintendents at Big Bend National Park sent [a letter](#) to the Department of Homeland Security urging it to not waive environmental and cultural compliance laws in order to build physical border infrastructure in the park.

We submitted [comments](#) to the chair of the National Capital Planning Commission urging a full public review of the proposed monumental arch on Columbia Island, between Arlington National Cemetery and the Lincoln Memorial. (See more on the arch below in “Around the Parks.”)

The Coalition joined four other conservation groups in submitting [comments](#) to the Bureau of Land Management New Mexico Office’s Third Quarter 2026 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale, urging compliance with environmental laws and federal leasing regulations, and with concerns about risks to nearby Carlsbad Caverns National Park. We also submitted [a protest](#) with three other conservation groups to the Bureau of Land Management Utah Office’s Second Quarter 2026 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale challenging the lease of several parcels in southeast Utah that fail to protect the Old Spanish National Historic Trail

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

- [National parks face a strained summer as staffing shortages deepen](#), press release
- [National Park experts urge Congress to press Burgum on staffing, censorship, and funding at upcoming hearing](#), press release
- [Steve Pearce’s confirmation an affront to American principles](#), press release
- [Former NPS officials push back on Big Bend border plans](#), *E&E News*
- [Border wall in Big Bend would be ‘egregious assault’ on National Park System](#), *National Parks Traveler*

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.

- *Difficulty hiring seasonal staff* - *Government Executive* published [an article](#) highlighting the challenges to the Interior Department hiring seasonal staff. As of late March, the DOI was tracking 7% behind its 2025 seasonal hiring figures. As of early April, 4,200 seasonal employees had been onboarded, a 1% decrease from 2025, and a 14% decrease from 2024. Reasons for the declines include an 18% reduction in human resources staff, low confidence in federal work impeding recruitment, and questions on federal job applications that ask for “their preferred Trump administration policies.” Source: *Government Executive*
- *“Most endangered historic places”* - On May 20, the National Trust for Historic Preservation announced their 2026 list of their “most endangered historic places” in the U.S. Several of them are NPS sites, including Tule Lake National Monument, Chaco Culture National Historical Park, Women’s Rights National Historical Park, Stonewall National Monument, and the President’s House Site at Independence National Historical Park. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- *DOI reorganization low on efficiencies* - The *Federal News Network* published an interview with Tim Whitehouse, executive director for Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility about the results of the 2025 reorganization of the Department of the Interior, including chaos, unclear management, backlogs, and trauma for employees. Source: [Federal News Network](#)
- *Rec.gov “rife with bots and inequality”* - *RE:PUBLIC* published [an article](#) about *Recreation.gov*, which has been plagued by bots taking reservations and has reaped enormous profits for contractor Booz Allen Hamilton. Source: *RE:PUBLIC*
- *Parks rated by # of deaths* - The NPS released statistics of deaths in parks in 2025. The sites with the highest numbers were Lake Mead National Recreation Area (18), Blue Ridge Parkway (13), Natchez Trace Parkway (11), Great Smoky Mountains National Park (10), and Yosemite National Park (9). Source: [The Hill](#)
- *Socioeconomic research contract* - On May 19, the project management firm Otak signed a \$30 million, five-year, contract with the NPS to “conduct consulting and research projects supporting national park operations and development,” including “visitor and workforce studies, resource valuation, economic impact and development analysis, traffic assessments, and regulatory and environmental reviews.” Source: [The Investor](#)
- *Investment in thinning saves firefighting \$* - A new report by the Property and Environment Research Center, shows every \$1 invested in fuel treatments on Pacific Northwest national

forests results in \$5-6 in reduced firefighting expenditures. These treatments include thinning and prescribed burns. Landscape-scale projects (2,400 acres or more) are generally better at reducing expenses. Source: [Daily Montanan](#)

- *Canada offers free park entrance fees* - Parks Canada is offering the Canada Strong Pass, which allows all visitors, including non-residents, to visit the country's 48 national parks for free between June 19 and September 7. This is the second year of the program, which is an effort to boost tourism. In 2025, Parks Canada reported a 13% increase in visitation. Source: [SFGate](#)
- *Joe Rogan podcast on national park disappearances* - On May 20, the "Joe Rogan Experience" podcast interviewed David Paulides about "the thousands of bizarre and unexplained disappearances that occur in North American national parks." Source: [The Sinju Post](#)

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Arches National Park* - On May 19, Grand County (UT) commissioners voted 4-3 to commit \$500,000 toward a proposed Arches shuttle pilot intended to reduce congestion at the park. This would join \$1 million approved unanimously on May 15 by the Utah Transportation Commission, and a proposed \$1.5 million contribution from the NPS. Source: [KPCW](#)
- *Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial* - Congressional representatives from Virginia have asked the NPS to retain language in its junior ranger booklet that reads, "In 1829, Robert E. Lee promised to serve in the Army and protect the United States. In 1861, he broke his promise and fought for slavery." The language is being scrubbed from the booklet due President Donald Trump's executive order calling for the removal of language "disparaging" to Americans past and present. Source: [WVTF](#)
- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - On May 14, the parkway announced the selection of MM176, LLC, for a 10-year concession contract providing food, beverage, and retail services at historic Mabry Mill. The concessioner is expected to complete interior renovations in 2026 and open to the public in Spring 2027. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)
- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - *E&E News* published [an article](#) about the challenges to protecting or relocating homes in Buxton, North Carolina, inside Cape Hatteras, that are affected by rising sea levels. 31 houses have collapsed since 2020. Source: *E&E News*
- *Canyonlands National Park* - On July 27, the park will begin phase three of a multi-year project to improve vehicle and pedestrian safety in the Island in the Sky district. Mondays through Thursdays, Grand View Point Overlook and Trail will be closed. The phase is expected to be complete on October 1. The fourth and final phase is expected to take

place in Summer 2027. The project is being funded by recreation fees. Source:

[Canyonlands National Park](#)

- *Devils Tower National Monument* - CNN published [an article](#) about the park, including its popularization via the movie “Close Encounters of the Third Kind.” Source: CNN
- *Everglades National Park* - On May 19, the park, in collaboration with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida, and the South Florida Water Management District, announced dates for this year’s Florida Python Challenge. The event, which is a competition to remove Burmese pythons from the Everglades ecosystem, will take place from July 10-19. Source: [Everglades National Park](#)
- *Golden Gate National Recreation Area* - On May 14, President Donald Trump appointed six new members to oversee the Presidio Trust. President Trump had fired the previous six board members last month and, in February, signed an executive order directing the trust to reduce spending and staffing. Source: [SFGate](#)
- *Great Sand Dunes National Park* - Low snowpack in the Medano Creek watershed has resulted in the creek drying up before it reaches the main dunes parking lot. It is said to be flowing at less than two cubic feet per second, compared to average flows of 40 cubic feet per second. Source: [Colorado Public Radio](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - On June 8, the Foothills Land Conservancy will close on the purchase of a 600-acre property known as the “Oliver Tract,” which will be transferred to the park. It will be the largest addition to the park since 2009. Source: [WATE](#)
- *Haleakalā National Park* - On May 21, the park’s visitor center reopened after a project to make repairs and building improvements. Source: [Haleakalā National Park](#)
- *Keweenaw National Historical Park* - On May 21, the park’s advisory commission announced this year’s Keweenaw Heritage Grant program, consisting of \$149,912 for 14 grants to local businesses and organizations supporting historic preservation, interpretation, education, and curatorial projects. Source: [Keweenaw National Historical Park](#)
- *Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park, Pu’uhonua o Hōnaunau National Historical Park, and Pu’ukoholā Heiau National Historic Site* - The U.S. Geological Survey published a new report, “Evaluation of Benthic Habitat Change within the National Historic Sites of Hawai’i’s Kona Coast,” which documents widespread losses of live coral cover due to marine heatwaves. The research is based on underwater imagery collected in the early 2000s through 2022. Source: [U.S. Geological Survey](#)
- *Lincoln Memorial* - On May 26, the NPS opened time-entry tickets on *Recreation.gov* for the new Lincoln Memorial undercroft experience, which includes exhibits and a view of the engineering below the memorial. Tickets are free, with a \$1 service charge. Source:

[National Mall and Memorial Parks](#)

- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - On May 15, President Donald Trump announced that he plans to build the “National Garden of American Heroes” in West Potomac Park, an NPS site that currently consists of a range of athletic fields. He called the site “a totally BARREN field of Prime Waterfront Real Estate.” The proposal has not been reviewed by the National Capital Planning Commission or U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, nor has it been approved by Congress, which has authority over commemorative works in the “Reserve” area of Washington, DC. Congress did allocate \$40 million for the statue garden last year. Source: [E&E News](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - On May 21, the Commission of Fine Arts approved a modified plan for the proposed “Triumphal Arch” on Columbia Island. The design would be 250-feet tall, including a 60-foot golden statue of Lady Liberty flanked by eagles. Commissioners stated they liked the project because it reflected prior plans to build memorials there (see next bullet). Source: [Politico](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - *Newsweek* published [an article](#) about a pair of monumental columns designed in 1924 to be placed on Columbia Island, that were never built. The Trump administration is citing as evidence that the proposed “Triumphal Arch” is a Congressionally-approved idea. Source: *Newsweek*
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - The NPS published [an article](#) about the efforts that have gone into restoring Dupont Circle. Source: *National Park Service Office of Communications*
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - 13 statues have been put on display at Freedom Plaza, including one of Founding Father Caesar Rodney that was removed in 2020 due to his role enslaving hundreds of individuals. A spokesperson for the NPS stated that “As we approach America’s 250th anniversary, the Trump administration has been committed to celebrating and acknowledging the full breadth of our nation’s history, including the story of Caesar Rodney and his pivotal ride in July 1776.” The twelve other sculptures represent 12 soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War. Source: [NBC Washington](#)
- *North Country National Scenic Trail* - In September 2025, the Trust for Public Land acquired 213 acres along Lake Superior and the Montreal River in Iron County, Wisconsin. The NPS recently purchased the property, with funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, National Park Foundation, and the Wyss Foundation. The acquisition will allow about three miles of the North Country Trail to be moved off of local roads. Source: [Wisconsin Public Radio](#)
- *Olympic National Park* - *GearJunkie* published [an article](#) about the Enchanted Valley Chalet, a 1931 cabin that has been closed to the public since 2013 due to vandalism and maintenance issues. The article documents NPS recommendations to remove the cabin and varying public opinion on the matter, as well as funding issues that have kept the

structure in management limbo. Source: *Gear Junkie*

- *Olympic National Park* - *Popular Science* published [an article](#) about the five working mules in the park, which support trail maintenance. This year's herd consists of Murl, Cutti, Pip, Checkers, and Gopher. Source: *Popular Science*
- *Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument* - On May 15, the park announced its certification as a Dark Sky Park through DarkSky International. The certification process was supported by International Sonoran Desert Alliance, Western National Parks, and DarkSky Southern Arizona. Source: [Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument](#)
- *Pearl Harbor National Memorial* - New emails obtained by the *Associated Press* reveal that FBI Director Kash Patel took a "VIP snorkel" around the *USS Arizona* last summer, an outing coordinated by the military. Snorkeling and diving are off-limits around the shipwreck, with the exception of official surveys or interment of *USS Arizona* survivors that want to rest eternally with their shipmates, though "a handful of dignitaries, including military and government officials responsible for management of the memorial" have been allowed to swim at the site on occasion. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- *Rocky Mountain National Park* - Sarah Corning, the park's volunteer program manager, received the national 2025 Excellence in Volunteer Management Award. Source: [National Park Service Office of Communications](#)
- *Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* - Earlier this year, a gray wolf entered Sequoia National Park for the first time in over 100 years. The wolf, who has a tracking collar, has traveled several hundred miles across the state this year, including Los Angeles County and Inyo County. Source: [USA Today](#)
- *Whiskeytown National Recreation Area* - The NPS issued a Finding of No Significant Impact and Floodplain Statement of Findings for rebuilding the Whiskeytown Environmental School campus, which was destroyed by the 2018 Carr Fire. Source: [Active NorCal](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has found that wolf population levels in the greater Yellowstone ecosystem have fallen to their lowest level since wolves were reestablished in 1995 and 1996, likely due to distemper. A 2025 count found 253 wolves and 14 breeding pairs. Source: [Boston Herald](#)
- *Yellowstone National Park* - *SFGate* published [an article](#) about disposed bear spray canisters slowing work efforts at refuse collection sites in Park County (MT). Visitors often throw them out after visits to the region, including Yellowstone, because they cannot fly with them. Yellowstone Forever and Counter Assault, a bear spray company, used to collaborate on a recycling program that included drop boxes for the canisters, but the program no longer exists. There are no recycling units in the Greater Yellowstone area any more. The Park County Public Works Department will soon install six bear spray collection

containers to keep it separate from other trash, with the hopes of a future recycling solution. Source: *SFGate*

- *Yosemite National Park* - The *New York Post* published [an article](#) highlighting issues related to increased visitation at Yosemite National Park since it jettisoned its timed-entry reservation system. [Editor note: See more in “Incidents” below.] Source: *New York Post*
- *Yosemite National Park* - On May 21, a seven-year-old became the youngest individual to ever climb the granite monolith known as El Capitan. He climbed with his father, and two older brothers, one of whom was the previous youngest climber at age eight. Source: [ABC News](#)

Legal Actions

Legal actions involving the National Park Service. If the Coalition is involved in a lawsuit, those will be recorded in “Coalition Actions” above.

- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - On May 19, the Washington Litigation Group filed a reply brief in the emergency litigation challenging the Trump administration’s painting the Lincoln Memorial reflecting pool blue, arguing the government knowingly flouted the review process that applies to historic structures. A hearing following the brief was held on May 22, in which Justice Department staff argued that the changes are not fundamentally altering the pool and are designed to prevent algae growth and stop water from leaking. They argued that halting the project is unnecessary, as the pool can be repainted grey later if the color is deemed to have been applied improperly. Source: [Washington Litigation Group, The New York Times](#)

Personnel Changes

- *Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area* - K. Lynn Berry was selected as the new superintendent. She has 16 years of NPS experience, most recently as superintendent of Rosie the Riveter/WWII Home Front National Historical Park, John Muir National Historic Site, Eugene O’Neill National Historic Site, Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial, and the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail. She will begin her new role in June. Source: [Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area](#)

Park People

Deceased

- Matthew John Bihl, 68, passed away on May 19. When he was “a young man,” he spent summers “working in Yellowstone National Park and serving as a tour guide in the Everglades.” Source: [Legacy/Serenity Funeral Care](#)

- Bonnie Ann Burns, 56, passed away on May 7. Bonnie worked for the NPS doing GIS mapping for several years in Washington, DC. Source: [James H. Delaney and Son Funeral Home](#)
- Vickee Lee Wilcox, 74, passed away on May 5. Vickee “managed the RV park at Yellowstone National Park” in her “earlier years.” Source: [Big Bend Sentinel](#)

In the News

- *News Channel 9* published [an article](#) about how to stay safe in the wilderness, including a profile of Andrew Herrington of Big Pig Outdoors. Andrew worked for the NPS for 20 years, including in law enforcement and search and rescue. Source: *News Channel 9*
- The University of Wyoming published an article about Sarah Collins, a faculty member who passed away in October 2025. Sarah posthumously received the Victoria J. Bertics Memorial Award for her contributions to aquatic science at the joint meeting of the Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography and the International Society of Limnology. At the time of her death, she served as the director of the University of Wyoming Research Institute at AMK Ranch in Grand Teton National Park, a joint venture with the NPS. Source: [University of Wyoming](#)

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.

- *Civil War Defenses of Washington, National Capital Region, Rock Creek Park* - Public comment is open through June 15 on an updated management plan for the Fort Circle Parks. Source: [Civil War Defenses of Washington](#)
- *Denali National Park and Preserve* - Public comment is [open through July 17](#) on a proposal that would increase the number of vehicles per day by roughly 60% on miles 15-90 of the Denali Park Road. Source: [Anchorage Daily News](#)
- *Mount Rainier National Park* - Public comment is [open through May 29](#) on a White River flood and erosion risk reduction project on State Route 410 by the Washington State Department of Transportation. Source: [Mount Rainier National Park](#)
- *Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore* - Public comment is [open through June 22](#) on an accessibility self-evaluation and transition plan. Source: [Pictured Rocks National Seashore](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - Public comment [will open on May 28](#) and be open through June 29 for a proposal to improve the John Muir Trailhead and the Mist Trail corridor. Source: [Yosemite 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 this period.

Senate Actions

May 14

The Senate agreed to S. Res 729, recognizing and honoring Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, and the Corps of Discovery, on the 222nd Anniversary of their expedition to explore the Louisiana Purchase.

The Senate agreed to S. Res. 733, expressing that public servants should be commended for their dedication and continued service to the United States during Public Service Recognition Week and throughout the year

The Senate agreed to S. Res 734, designating May 16, 2026, as “Kids to Parks Day.” The 16th annual Kids to Parks Day goals are to promote healthy outdoor recreation and responsible environmental stewardship; to empower young people; and to encourage families to get outdoors and visit the parks and public lands of the United States. The resolution recognizes the national, state, and neighborhood parks located throughout the country and their importance in providing a variety of natural resources and public land, often with free access, to individuals seeking outdoor recreation; and recognizes the importance of outdoor recreation and the preservation of open spaces in promoting the health and education of the young people of the United States.

May 20

The Senate discharged the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources from further consideration of S. 603, to designate the General George C. Marshall House in the Commonwealth of Virginia, as an affiliated area of the National Park System, and the bill was then passed. The General George C. Marshall House is located in Leesburg, Virginia, and would be managed by the General George C. Marshall International Center.

The Senate discharged the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources from further consideration of S. 790, to re-designate the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center in Casper, Wyoming, as the “Barbara L. Cubin National Historic Trails Interpretive Center,” and the bill was then passed.

House of Representatives Actions

May 13 - The Committee on Natural Resources held a hearing entitled “Examining the President's Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Request for the Department of the Interior.” Testimony was heard from Doug Burgum, Secretary, Department of the Interior. (See more on budget below.)

May 19 - The House agreed to suspend the rules and passed H.R. 1352, amended, to designate the General George C. Marshall House, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, as an affiliated area of the National Park System.

May 20 - The Committee on Energy and Commerce: Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing on “Corrosion, Collapse, and Clean-Up: Examining the Potomac Interceptor Collapse,” about the major sewer line break at Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park in January. DC Water still does not know what caused the pipe to collapse; investigations are ongoing. Emergency repair costs are now estimated at \$60 million, and DC Water has identified three new high-priority areas of concern, but their locations have not been disclosed. During the hearing, it was revealed that the National Park Service did not approve maintenance permits over an 8-year time frame.

May 21

The House failed to pass H.R. 1329, the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum Act, to permit the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum to be located within the Reserve of the National Mall, by a yea-and-nay vote of 204 yeas to 216 nays. A motion to reconsider was offered but no action was taken at this time, so the motion remains pending.

The Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies held a markup on the Subcommittee's bill on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2027. The Subcommittee's bill was forwarded to the full Committee, without amendment.

The language pertaining to the National Park Service/System as reported by the Subcommittee from the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2027 bill is as follows:

- Operation of the National Park System: \$2,874,162,000, including \$11.7 million for planning and interagency coordination in support of Everglades restoration, and \$15 million to the National Park Foundation. In addition, an amount equal to the amount deposited in this Fiscal Year into the National Park Medical Services Fund.
- National Recreation and Preservation (recreation programs, natural programs, cultural programs, heritage partnership programs, environmental compliance and review, international park affairs, and grant administration): \$92.3 million.
- Historic Preservation Fund: \$163.7 million, including \$25.5 million for Save America's Treasures Grants, \$30.3 million for Competitive grants, \$11 million to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, \$7 million for grants for the restoration of historic properties, \$4 million for grants related to the semiquincentennial anniversary of the United States.
- Construction: \$90.1 million. For any project initially funded in Fiscal Year 2027 with a future phase indicated in the National Park Service 5-Year Line Item Construction Plan, a single procurement may be issued which includes the full scope of the project. National Park

Service Donations, Park Concessions Franchise Fees, and Recreation Fees may be made available for the cost of adjustments and changes within the original scope of effort for projects funded by the National Park Service Construction appropriation.

- Centennial Challenge: \$5 million. Not less than 50 percent of the total cost of each project or program shall be derived from non-federal sources in the form of donated cash, assets, or a pledge of donation guaranteed by an irrevocable letter of credit.
- Administrative Provisions -
 - When franchise fees are collected and set aside in a special account, that money can be used, without extra Congressional approval, anywhere in the National Park System to pay off or reduce what the government owes a concessioner for their business improvements or investments, as long as that concession is expected to bring in as much in franchise fees over the life of its contract.
 - For the costs of administration of the Land and Water Conservation Fund grants, the National Park Service may retain up to 3% of the amounts which are authorized to be disbursed under such section.
 - National Park Service funds may be transferred to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Department of Transportation, and may include a reasonable amount for FHWA administrative support costs.
 - The National Park Service shall maintain staffing levels in order to fulfill the mission required, including to protect natural and cultural resources, provide and maintain appropriate access and recreation for visitors, provide safety precautions for visitors and staff, maintain physical and natural infrastructure, provide information and respond to stakeholders and the general public, conduct Tribal consultation, provide for administrative support, administer historic and other preservation programs, and carry out other activities in support of effectively operating the National Park System and carrying out programs administered by the National Park Service in a timely manner.

Proposed Legislation of Note

We don't usually report on proposed legislation until it has gained enough traction to make it to the committee level (see above). Many proposed bills go nowhere. However, some proposals receive significant media attention or would have significant enough impact on the National Park Service that we note them here.

- H.R. 8523, the Public Lands Workforce Stability Act was introduced in the House of Representatives on April 27. This act would prohibit mass terminations at public land management agencies until 2030.

Other Relevant Department of the Interior News

- *Changes to appeals process* - On May 22, the Department of the Interior announced reforms to streamline the administrative appeals process, handled through the Office of Hearings and Appeals. Further details about the reforms were not given in the press

release. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

- *Changes to National Petroleum Reserve permitting* - On May 15, the Department of the Interior announced “a new effort to streamline permitting for oil and gas infrastructure” in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska. “The effort comes in response to a petition for rulemaking from the Alaska Oil and Gas Association that requested the Bureau of Land Management amend its regulations,” asking for streamlining permitting for construction and operation that mean predefined criteria. [Public comment is open](#) on the proposed permitting changes through July 6. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$4 billion oil and gas lease sale* - On May 20, the Department announced that it generated over \$4 billion from a Bureau of Land Management quarterly oil and gas lease sale in New Mexico and Texas. The sale included leases of 74 parcels totaling 33,530 acres. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *\$67 million for wetland conservation* - On May 19, the Department of the Interior announced \$44.79 million in North American Wetlands Conservation Act funding and \$22.6 million in Migratory Bird Conservation Fund grants approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)

Incidents

Listed alphabetically by park/program.

Appalachian National Scenic Trail, Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Bear activity closures

On May 21, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy announced the closure of Mollies Ridge Shelter, Russell Field Shelter, and Icewater Springs Shelter due to “heightened, aggressive black bear activity,” including obtaining human food and circling a shelter for several hours. Source: [The Trek](#)

Cape Hatters National Seashore

Drowning

On May 13, a 41-year-old was in the ocean on the eastern side of Avon, North Carolina. Personnel from the NPS, Hatteras Island Rescue Squad, and Dare County Emergency Medical Services extracted the individual from the water and provided medical care, but resuscitation efforts were unsuccessful. Source: [Arkansas Democrat Gazette](#)

Castillo de San Marcos National Monument

Influencer charges dropped

A conservative influencer received a federal citation from NPS law enforcement for refusing to relocate while shooting footage at a protest at the park against Immigration and Customs

Enforcement (ICE) actions in January. The ticket for violating a lawful order has now been dismissed. Source: [St. Johns Citizen](#)

Channel Islands National Park

Boat disablement rescue and wildfire

On May 14, a 67-year-old crashed their boat against the rocks at Santa Rosa Island, leaving them stranded. The following day, they shot “at least two flares” in an attempt to get the attention of passing boats. Two different boats saw the flares and contacted the NPS to report the situation. The Coast Guard sent a helicopter to extract the individual. The flares likely set off a wildfire on the island, requiring evacuation and closure of the island. (See “Wildfires” below for current status.) Source: [The Guardian](#)

Mount Rainier National Park

Bear activity

On May 21, the park closed the Wonderland Trail between Narada Falls Trail and Stevens Canyon Road due to “unusual bear activity.” No further details have been released. Source: [Mount Rainier National Park \(Facebook\)](#)

Yosemite National Park

Vandalism

This month, a series of vandalism incidents was documented along the Mist Trail, including stickers and on railings and signs, locks attached to railings, and names carved into rocks and trees. Source: [SFGate](#)

Yosemite National Park

“Chaos” over holiday weekend

Over Memorial Day weekend, the park experienced “chaotic conditions,” including two-hour wait times to enter the park, a lack of parking starting at 7:30 AM, many cars parked “on meadows” and other off-road areas, and long shuttle lines. Source: [ABC7](#), [The Washington Times](#)

Zion National Park

Car off roadway

On May 19, a car was traveling eastbound on the Zion-Mt. Carmel Highway, a quarter mile west of the Tunnel, when they lost control of the vehicle and crashed 30 feet down an adjacent embankment. Crews from the park’s search and rescue team and fire department stabilized the vehicle and utilized technical rope rescue techniques to extract the patient. An ambulance from Hurricane Valley (UT) Fire and Rescue took the driver to a local hospital. The highway was closed for three hours during the rescue operation. Source: [St. George News](#)

Zion National Park

Hiker fall

On May 8, a hiker on the Kayenta Trail took a 35-foot fall, resulting in “several potentially broken bones” and impalement of a leg by a branch. First responders were dispatched to the scene to provide medical care, and a Utah Department of Public Safety helicopter hoisted the individual to the Zion Lodge. They were then transferred to Intermountain Life Flight and transported to a local hospital. The Kayenta Trail was closed temporarily during the rescue. Source: [St. George News](#)

Wildfires

- *Coronado National Memorial* - On May 14, a wildfire was reported near Montezuma Pass. On May 17, the fire was 100% contained at 61 acres. Source: [Coronado National Memorial](#)
- *Channel Islands National Park* - On May 15, a fire was started on Santa Rosa Island, likely by flares from a stranded boater. As of May 26, the Santa Rosa Island Fire was 18,379 acres and 97% contained. Two structures, the Johnson’s Lee Equipment Shed, and Wreck Line Camp Cabin, have been destroyed. The island’s grove of rare Torrey pines “appears to have been mostly spared” from the fire, as well as the historic South Point Light Station. Source: [The Guardian](#), [CAL FIRE](#), [SFGate](#), [Santa Barbara Independent](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Cape Hatteras National Seashore* - On May 21, the park reopened over a mile of beach between the south end of Buxton and off-road vehicle ramp 43, “following an interim response action by the Army Corps of Engineers, soil testing, and consultations with the U.S. Public Health Service and Dare County’s (NC) Department of Health and Human Services.” The beach in front of the Village of Buxton remains closed due to the danger of collapsing structures. Source: [Cape Hatteras National Seashore](#)
- *Lake Chelan National Recreation Area, North Cascades National Park* - On May 7, the park announced that operations at Stehekin Landing will be limited this summer due to historic floods in December (see [12/24/25](#), [2/18/26](#), and [3/18/26 Coalition Reports](#)) that left the area’s wastewater treatment plant inoperable. North Cascades Lodge will not offer any public services this season, but Lakeview and Purple Point Campgrounds will remain open to first-come, first-serve visitors. Postal service, ferry service, and private tours will still continue to operate. The park is actively working to restore wastewater service. Source: [North Cascades National Park](#)

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- Regular Correspondent: Chris Soller
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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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