



The Coalition Report

Wednesday, October 14, 2026

Nominations for the George Hartzog Award are [open through October 15](#). The award is for an individual or group that demonstrates outstanding support for the mission of the National Park Service or National Park System. Past award recipients can be seen [here](#).

Make a nomination

Coalition Actions

The Coalition joined 207 organizations and businesses in [a letter](#) to the Department of Agriculture opposing the rescission of the U.S. Forest Service's Roadless Rule.

We submitted [comments](#) to the State of Utah Department of Environmental Quality opposing its proposed revision to the Regional Haze plan, arguing that it does nothing to reduce haze pollution by allowing coal-fired units to keep operating.

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

- [Coalition to Protect America's National Parks and Keep Big Bend Wild urge DHS to extend border wall construction pause at Big Bend National Park](#), press release
- [Glacier work punted as Trump administration prioritizes D.C. projects like gilded statues](#), *Missoulain*
- [Yosemite National Park deserves better](#), *Veterans for Public Lands*, op-ed by Coalition Member JT Reynolds

National/Regional NPS Updates

News on NPS management and oversight, and on trends and issues affecting the National Park System.

- *\$4.7 million for educational programming* - On September 29, the National Park Foundation announced the award of \$4.7 million through its Open OutDoors for Kids program to support educational programming for 83 grantees during the 2026-27 school year. Source: [National Park Foundation](#)
- *Robert Stanton honored* - On October 2, the National Park Trust announced that Robert G. Stanton, former director of the NPS, has received the 2026 American Park Experience Award. Source: [Outdoor Sportswire](#)
- *Wealthy most likely to benefit from park reservation systems* - A new study by the University of Colorado Boulder found that the more competitive a national park permit system is, the more likely it is that the successful permittees are from higher-income zip codes. The study suggests that the systems might favor individuals with better broadband access, more flexibility in their work day, and more tech savviness. Source: [9News](#)
- *Freedom 250 concerns* - Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility has obtained documents through Freedom of Information Act requests that highlight the “questionable practices of Freedom 250 and their financial sponsor the National Park Foundation.” These findings raise questions about the abuse of taxpayer funds and a lack of transparency about contracting during the sesquicentennial celebrations for the U.S.’ 250th anniversary. Source: [Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility](#)

Around the Parks

Reports are in alphabetical order by park/program name.

- *Alaska Region, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve* - *More Than Just Parks* has published [an interactive site](#), including photos, videos, and maps, describing the proposed Ambler Road, which would cross Gates of the Arctic and have ramifications for the greater Alaska Region ecosystem. Source: *More Than Just Parks*
- *American World War II Heritage City Program* (an NPS-administered program) - On October 2, the Department of the Interior announced the designation of Whittier, Alaska, as an American World War II Heritage City. Source: [Department of the Interior](#)
- *Arches National Park, Bryce Canyon National Park, Canyonlands National Park, Capitol Reef National Park, Zion National Park* - On October 8, the NPS announced the availability of all-terrain wheelchairs for visitors at the five Utah national parks. The chairs were supported with funding from Zion Forever Project, Friends of Arches and Canyonlands Parks, Outdoor Access Project, private donors, and the NPS. Source: [National Park Service Intermountain Region \(Regions 6, 7, 8\)](#)

- *Blue Ridge Parkway* - On October 5, the NPS announced the reopening of a section of the parkway between the James River, milepost 63.7, and Little Switzerland, milepost 344. Additionally, 48 of the 60 landslides caused by Hurricane Helene in 2024 have been repaired, and only 11 miles of parkway are left to restore. Source: [Blue Ridge Parkway](#)
- *Crater Lake National Park* - In early 2025, the Sager Building, which houses the superintendent's office and other administrative functions, had part of its roof collapse due to heavy snow. It has remained open to the elements due to staffing gaps and federal contracting hurdles. The building is part of the Munson Valley Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The park's superintendent asked the park's three non-profit partners to split the \$41,000 repair cost to avoid going through another winter without repairs. It is not yet clear whether they will fulfill the request. Source: [SFGate](#)
- *Gateway National Recreation Area* - Runway Green, an educational nonprofit organization, signed a 60-year lease for a 7-acre campus at Floyd Bennett Field focused on "career-connected education, agriculture, environmental stewardship, and other real-world learning opportunities." The project is expected to break ground in 2027, starting with a three-acre urban farm, built in collaboration with The Campaign Against Hunger. Longer-term plans include a public high school, welcome center, ropes course, campgrounds, and other facilities. Source: [Brooklyn Daily Eagle](#)
- *George Washington Memorial Parkway, Glen Echo Park* - On October 7, the NPS announced a Finding of No Significant Impact for the Glen Echo Park Management Plan Amendment, which will guide future planning and design. Source: [George Washington Memorial Parkway](#)
- *George Washington Memorial Parkway, National Mall and Memorial Parks* - On September 29, the American Institute of Architects sent a letter to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation urging it to shelve the proposed Triumphal Arch. The letter argues that it would disrupt the spatial relationship of the adjacent memorials, and alternative locations should be considered. Furthermore, the Association of Flight Attendants - CWA made a statement against the arch, citing safety concerns about both flight paths and military maneuvers. Source: [The Architect's Newspaper](#), [PBS](#)
- *Gettysburg National Military Park* - On October 21, the park, in partnership with the U.S. Mint and Gettysburg Foundation, will host a ceremony to celebrate the release of a Gettysburg Address Quarter. The coin commemorates the 250th anniversary of the United States. Source: [Gettysburg National Military Park](#)
- *Glacier National Park* - A new study published by the International St. Mary and Milk Rivers Study Board of the International Joint Commission recommends using an inflatable dam on St. Mary Lake to store water later into the summer. A park spokesperson stated that the park was not consulted in the development of the study, and has not been approached about constructing a dam on the lake. The study is aimed at improving water conditions

for farmers in Canada and the U.S., and it also considered other infrastructure options.

Source: [SFGate](#)

- *Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Lake Mead National Recreation Area* - *The Guardian* published [an article](#) about record-low levels of Lake Mead and Lake Powell, and how communities are adapting to shortages and fighting over water allotments. Source: *The Guardian*
- *Grand Teton National Park* - Major League Baseball commissioner Rob Manfred sent a letter to Teton County (WY) officials, stating that the league was conducting due diligence on several sites that could host MLB games, and “since the story was reported, it has become clear the local community does not want us to continue evaluating Grand Teton National Park as a potential site...We obviously would not bring a game to a community that has concerns about the venue, and will not continue to evaluate Grand Teton National Park as a potential site.” Source: [The New York Times](#)
- *Grand Teton National Park* - This fall, the Federal Highway Administration will complete emergency roadwork to slow riverbank erosion at the confluence of the Snake River and Buffalo Fork near U.S. Highway 26/89/191 at Moran Junction. The project is expected to take 12 weeks and wrap up in December. Traffic delays will be in place. The NPS and Federal Highway Administration are working on a longer-term solution to address both infrastructure and the river’s ecological health. Source: [Grand Teton National Park](#)
- *Great Smoky Mountains National Park* - On September 28, the park held a ribbon cutting for the reconstruction of the historic John Messer Barn in Greenbrier after it was heavily damaged by storms. The project was funded by the Friends of the Smokies. Source: *Great Smoky Mountains National Park*
- *Indiana Dunes National Park* - On October 1, the park announced the recent release of over 1,600 fatmucket mussels into the East Branch of the Little Calumet River as part of a restoration project to support the native ecosystem and improve water quality. Source: [Indiana Dunes National Park](#)
- *Isle Royale National Park* - On August 28, *Conservation Science and Practice* published [a study](#) about wolf translocation to the park. From 2018-2019, 19 wolves were released onto the island. The researchers found, after five years of studying mortality and reproduction, that there was an over 80% chance of wolf population persistence for 20 years, despite high levels of inbreeding. Source: *Conservation Science and Practice: A Journal of the Society for Conservation Biology*
- *Isle Royale National Park* - On October 1, the park announced that an application period for Commercial Use Authorization for the 2027 operating season will open on November 1. CUAs will be issued for services such as backcountry camping, guided hiking, environmental education, photography instruction, charter fishing, boat tours, and SCUBA or snorkeling tours. Applications will be due on November 30. Source: [Isle Royale National](#)

Park

- *Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park* - On October 15, the park will begin a rehabilitation and culvert replacement project on the Dyea Flats Road near the Slide Cemetery and Lost Lake Trailhead turnoff. The project is expected to be complete by November 23. Traffic delays may be in place. Source: [Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park](#)
- *Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument* - On September 29, the NPS, Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Army, and community partners participated in a ceremony to return a grave marker for an unknown 7th Cavalry soldier that was believed to have been stolen over 40 years ago. The grave marker had been found hidden inside a wall during a renovation. Source: [Federal Bureau of Investigations](#)
- *Mount Rainier National Park* - On September 28, the park began construction on the Fryingpan Creek Bridge replacement project. The new bridge will be constructed downstream from the existing bridge, and construction will include improvements to the Summerland Trailhead parking. Construction is expected to be done in Fall 2029. The Summerland Trailhead will remain closed for the duration of the project. Source: [Mount Rainier National Park](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks, Washington Monument* - On September 29, officials from the U.S. and United Kingdom buried a time capsule under the Washington Monument. A matching time capsule was placed beneath the statue of George Washington in London's Trafalgar Square last year. The capsule included letters from King Charles III, President Donald Trump, Vice President JD Vance, and local students; soil from George Washington's ancestral home in England' and a Royal Mint coin dedicated by King Charles. It is expected to be opened on July 4, 2276, 250 years in the future. Source: [CBS4](#)
- *National Mall and Memorial Parks* - On October 10, the NPS began to removed over 100 trees at the East Potomac Golf Course. The superintendent has stated that the tree removal is part of routine maintenance to eliminate potential hazards from the golf course, not part of the Trump administration's proposed renovation of the course. The park also claimed that they were only cutting trees "that do not contribute to the historic landscape." On October 12, a federal court judge ordered a 24-hour halt to tree cutting while considering an emergency order requested by plaintiffs in a lawsuit against the renovation. In the ruling, the judge cited a previous requirement for the court to be notified before any major work on the course began, stating, "What has happened has cost the government all of its credibility with me in this case." Source: [CNN](#), [The Guardian](#)
- *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* (an NPS-administered program) - The remains of a 12-year-old Alaska Native student who died of tuberculosis in 1900 at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, have been returned to their hometown in Shishmaref, Alaska. The Alaksa Native Heritage Center led the research in

connecting the individual to their home community. On October 4, a repatriation and burial ceremony was held for her. Source: [People](#)

- *New River Gorge National Park and Preserve* - The NPS, in partnership with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources and Virginia Tech University, is tagging Indiana bats and Virginia big-eared bats at the park with cellular tags to track their movement and understand their behaviors and habitat. Visitors with iPhones can contribute data by driving through the park with Bluetooth and location services enabled so that the tags' signals can ping off their location. One bat in the study was found to have flown 130 miles. Source: [People](#)
- *New River Gorge National Park and Preserve* - Scouting America gave the park the Distinguished Conservation Service Award Certificate at the 2026 Scouting America Jamboree for its exceptional commitment to conservation, stewardship, and education. Source: [Scouting America](#)
- *Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument* - On September 28, the NPS denied a request by Humane Borders to maintain water stations for immigrants in the park for the first time in 25 years. Permits have also been denied by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management. The NPS' denial letter stated that the water stations encourage immigrants to travel "deeper into dangerous terrain with a false sense of security." Source: [KJZZ](#)
- *The White House and President's Park* - *Bloomberg* published [an article](#) about efforts to bring back American chestnuts by genetically engineering them to be resistant to the blight that has threatened their survival. Two genetically engineered chestnuts were planted at the White House in April. Opponents have argued that genetically engineered trees may create unintended ecological consequences, and one report suggests that the two White House chestnuts were "in breach of a permit intended to stop genetic material escaping and pollinating wild trees." Source: *Bloomberg*
- *Yosemite National Park* - On October 6, the *Journal of Geophysical Research: Biogeosciences* published a study by scientists at Colorado State University tracking the effects of planting 40,000 sedge seedlings in Tuolumne Meadows. The effort was an attempt to improve soil quality in the meadows, which was impacted by sheep grazing in the late 1800s and early 1900s. After three years, the study found that soil health was improving, but the meadow was still releasing carbon, and it might take 25-30 years of restoration work to improve conditions. Source: [Newsweek](#)

Legal Actions

Legal actions involving the National Park Service. If the Coalition is involved in a lawsuit, it will be recorded in "Coalition Actions" above. Listed alphabetically, except for items affecting the entire NPS, which are listed on top.

- *National Park Service* - On September 29, Across Arizona Tours filed a lawsuit against the NPS, claiming that potential clients decided not to reserve a Grand Canyon National Park tour with the company due to increased fees for international visitors. The lawsuit acknowledged that the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act allows agencies to implement new fees, but not on a discriminatory basis. Source: [TheStreet](#)
- *Big Bend National Park* - On October 2, a federal court temporarily blocked the construction of a border wall and other infrastructure across the Big Bend region, stating that the plaintiffs of a lawsuit against the project are “likely to succeed on the merits of at least one of the claims in suit, that there is a likelihood that they will suffer serious, irreparable harm without an injunction, and that the balance of the equities and the public interest weigh in their favor.” The injunction will remain in place while the lawsuit is heard in court. Source: [ABC11](#)
- *Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve* - On September 30, a group of seven organizations filed an appeal in Alaska Superior Court against the State of Alaska for its decision to grant an easement for the proposed Ambler Road. The filing claims that the action violated the Alaska Constitution by failing to protect the public interest when considering its impacts on the environment and local communities, and by failing to provide a full picture of the project when it held its public comment period. Source: [Sierra Sun Times](#)
- *George Washington Memorial Parkway, National Mall and Memorial Parks* - Arlington County (VA) has filed a lawsuit against the NPS and Department of the Interior for the proposed Triumphal Arch, arguing it would disrupt the sightline, increase traffic, noise, and air pollution, and create other detrimental effects on the local community. The lawsuit claims the NPS has failed to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act. Source: [DC News Now](#)
- *Great Basin National Park* - On September 30, a federal appeals court sided 2-1 with Baker Ranches over its dispute with the park about water rights. The ranch claimed the park was illegally reducing its water flow through diversions and the planting of vegetation, while the park claimed sovereign immunity. Source: [Courthouse News Service](#)
- *Lincoln Memorial, National Mall and Memorial Parks* - One of the individuals accused and later cleared for vandalizing the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool has asked the Interior Department’s Office of the Inspector General to investigate the flawed installation of the pool’s liner. They have also requested that the Justice Department’s Office of the Inspector General investigate the case that was built against them, alleging “incompetence and wrongdoing.” (See “Incidents” below for more on the dismissal of the individual’s case.) Source: [Reuters](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - On October 6, Public Citizen, a Washington, DC, advocacy organization, filed a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit against the NPS and Department of the Interior over the failure to release requested communications between Yosemite

superintendent Raymond McPadden and Interior officials. The organization has stated that it is looking for political direction for a variety of decisions at the park. Source: [Active NorCal](#), [Public Citizen](#)

Personnel Changes

- *Mojave National Preserve* - Kevin Schluckebier was selected as the new superintendent. Kevin has six years of NPS experience, most recently as the Midwest Region's program manager for design and construction. He will begin his new role on October 18. Source: [Mojave National Park](#)
- *Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial* - Brian Harmon was selected to be the new superintendent. Brian has 15 years of NPS experience, most recently as acting superintendent and program lead for natural and cultural resources at Voyageurs National Park. He will begin his new role this fall. Source: [Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial](#)
- *Voyageurs National Park* - Jennifer Onufer was selected to be the new superintendent. Jennifer has many years of NPS experience, and most recently worked as park manager at Lake Berryessa Recreation Area (California State Parks). She will start her new role this fall. Source: [Voyageurs National Park](#)

Park People

Deceased

- Todd Alexander passed away on August 29. Todd worked for the NPS from 1983 through 2024, including time as a landscape architect at the Rocky Mountain Regional Office and 35 years at the Denver Service Center. Source: *NPS Denver Alumni News*
- Douglas "Doug" L. Caldwell passed away on May 20. Doug worked for the NPS for 22 years, including time as an editor in the Washington Office, management assistant at Mesa Verde National Park, interpretive specialist at the Rocky Mountain Regional Office, before retiring in 1995 as the public information officer at Rocky Mountain National Park. Source: Mike Caldwell
- Paul Greenfield, 92, passed away on October 4. Paul volunteered at Castillo de San Marcos National Monument for over 25 years, and received a volunteer service award from President George W. Bush. He also volunteered for a time at Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site. Source: [staugustine.com](#)
- Juline "Julie" Marie Leal, 67, passed away on September 12. Julie worked "in and near" Yellowstone National Park for several years. Source: [KRTV](#)
- Ronnie Paul Middleton, 61, passed away on October 5. Ronnie worked for a time at

Mammoth Cave National Park. Source: [Glasgow News 1](#)

- Jean “Jeannie” Carolyn Renzel, 89, passed away on September 24. Jeannie worked a summer job at Denali National Park and Preserve shortly after college. Source: [The Mercury News](#)
- James “Jim” Clark Roach, 82, passed away on September 25. Jim worked for the NPS for many years, including time at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Fort Frederica National Monument, Colonial National Historical Park, and Eisenhower National Historic Site and Gettysburg National Military Park. He retired in 2001 as the site manager for Eisenhower National Historic Site. Source: [Franklin County Free Press](#)

Celebrations of Life

- A celebration of life will be held for Jim Carrico on Saturday, October 24 at 11 AM at the Terlingua Cemetery, followed by a celebration at Desert Sports (Terlingua, TX). If unable to attend, please send memories to share at creasetall-at-gmail.com. Cards or letters can be mailed to Ginny Carrico, c/o Lisa Carrico (reach out to us here at the Coalition for an address). Jim passed away in November 2025. He worked for the NPS for many years, and retired as the superintendent of Big Bend National Park.

Open for Comment

Items will stay on this list until public comment has closed. Listed alphabetically, except for items affecting the entire NPS, which are listed on top.

- *National Park Service* - Public comment is [open through November 2](#) on a proposal to eliminate some review requirements for bicycle access on roads and trails in national park units. Source: [Federal Register](#)
- *Alaska Region, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve* - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has opened [public comment through November 2](#) on the Arctic Mine Development Project proposed by Ambler Metals, LLC. This would be the first mine permitted on the proposed Ambler Road, which would cross Gates of the Arctic and have effects on the greater Alaska Region ecosystems. Source: [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#)
- *Bent’s Old Fort National Historic Site* - Public comment is [open through October 23](#) on alternative concepts for the site. The current structure at the site, built in 1976 on the footprint of the original mid-1800s structure, has had major maintenance and stability issues. Source: [Bent’s Old Fort National Historic Site](#)
- *Big Cypress National Preserve* - Public comment is [open through December 1](#) on a proposal to update special regulations allowing the superintendent to establish designated off-road vehicle trails in the parcel known as “the Addition” using existing historic trails. Source: [Big Cypress National Preserve](#)

- *Cumberland Island National Seashore* - Public comment is [open through October 16](#) on two proposed voluntary land exchanges on the island. Source: [Cumberland Island National Seashore](#)
- *Grand Canyon National Park* - Public comment is [open through November 6](#) on draft redevelopment concepts for the North Rim, which burned during the 2025 Dragon Bravo Fire. Source: [Grand Canyon National Park](#)
- *Valles Caldera National Preserve* - Public comment is [open through October 16](#) on the issuance of a special use permit to the Pueblo of Jemez for the take of a bald or golden eagle for religious purposes. Source: [Albuquerque Journal](#)
- *Vicksburg National Military Park* - Public comment is [open through November 5](#) on a redesign of the primary gateway and entrance road system. Source: [Vicksburg National Military 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

- Public Law 119–11, signed on September 25, 2026 (S. 603) designates the General George C. Marshall House, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, as an affiliated area of the National Park System to promote public appreciation of the historic contributions made by George Catlett Marshall, Jr.. George Catlett Marshall, Jr. served as Army Chief of Staff during World War II, and later as Secretary of State, president of the American Red Cross, and Secretary of Defense. The bill designates the George C. Marshall International Center as the management entity for the affiliated area. The Department of the Interior must enter into an agreement with the center that describes the roles and responsibilities for management of the affiliated area. Further, Interior may provide technical assistance and enter into cooperative agreements with the center for the purpose of providing financial assistance for the marketing, marking, interpretation, and preservation of the affiliated area.
- Public Law 119–117, signed on September 25, 2026, (S. 790) re-designates the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center in Casper, Wyoming, as the “Barbara L. Cubin National Historic Trails Interpretive Center.”

Senate Actions

September 29 - The Senate passed H.R. 1945, America's National Churchill Museum National Historic Landmark Act. This bill designates the America's National Churchill Museum, including the Winston Churchill Memorial, located at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, as the

America's National Churchill Museum National Historic Landmark. Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill gave a speech titled The Sinews of Peace, also widely known as the Iron Curtain Speech, at the college in 1946. The bill permits the Department of the Interior to enter into cooperative agreements with public and private entities for the purposes of protecting historic resources at the landmark and providing educational and interpretive facilities for the public. Interior may provide technical and financial assistance to partner entities. The bill also directs Interior to conduct a Special Resource Study to evaluate the national significance of the landmark and to determine the suitability and feasibility of designating it as a unit of the National Park System. The study must consider alternatives to that designation for the preservation, protection, and interpretation of the landmark, and must include cost estimates associated with identified alternatives.

September 30 -

The Senate passed S. 2498, a bill that authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to extend certain leases within units of the National Park System without opening the lease to bidding, after agreeing to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute. The amended bill requires the NPS to go through a number of steps to determine if the extended lease is in the best interest of the NPS and that competing interests would not provide a better service. Also it provides for termination of the extended lease if the lessee defaults or doesn't comply with the terms of the extended lease.

The Senate passed H.R. 6380 after discharging the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources from further consideration of the bill. The bill will re-designate Chiricahua National Monument in the state of Arizona as Chiricahua National Park.

The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources ordered favorably reported on several business items, including:

- S. 2970, to authorize the use of off-highway vehicles in certain areas of Capitol Reef National Park, Utah, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute. This bill makes the state law of Utah applicable to the use of motor vehicles (including off-highway vehicles) on the portions of each of Burr Trail Road, Cathedral Road, Hartnet Road, Highway 24, Notom Bullfrog Road, Polk Creek Road, Oil Well Bench Road, Baker Ranch Road, South Desert Overlook Road, Temple of the Sun and Moon Road, Gypsum Sinkhole Road, and Sulphur Creek Road that are located within the boundaries of the Capitol Reef National Park in Utah
- S. 3524, to amend title 54, United States Code, to modify certain cost-sharing requirements for grant programs under the American Battlefield Protection Program, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute; This bill extends through Fiscal Year 2035 three National Park Service (NPS) grant programs that preserve U.S. battlefields and requires the NPS to study additional sites for potential preservation. Specifically, the bill extends through FY35 grant programs for the acquisition, interpretation modernization, and restoration of certain U.S. battlefields. Under current law, the grants are authorized

through FY28. It authorizes \$2,000,000 for each fiscal year through Fiscal Year 2035 to be appropriated to the Secretary to provide for such grants; and requires the NPS to prepare or certify studies of locations tied to significant events during the French and Indian War (1754-1763) and the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) for potential preservation

- H.R. 7619, to amend title 54, United States Code, to modify certain cost-sharing requirements for grant programs under the American Battlefield Protection Program. This bill extends through FY36 three National Park Service (NPS) grant programs that preserve U.S. battlefields and requires the NPS to study additional sites for potential preservation. Specifically, the bill extends through FY36 grant programs for the acquisition, interpretation modernization, and restoration of certain U.S. battlefields. Under current law, the grants are authorized through FY28. The bill also requires the NPS to prepare or certify studies of locations tied to significant events during the French and Indian War (1754-1763) and the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) for potential preservation
- H.R. 2306, to reauthorize the Adams Memorial Commission, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute; The Adams Memorial - Great American Heroes Act would extend through 2032 the Adams Memorial Commission, whose purpose is to establish a permanent memorial in Washington, DC, to honor John Adams and his legacy. The bill specifies that the Adams Memorial shall be located within the area specified by the Adams Memorial Commission in a February 25, 2025 map (i.e., south of the White House, adjacent to Ellipse Road and near Pennsylvania Avenue and 15th Street, Northwest). If the Commission determines that this location is not suitable or feasible due to physical or security constraints, the bill requires that the memorial be located in the Reserve, an area which generally extends from the United States Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial, and from the White House to the Jefferson Memorial
- H.R. 5729, to 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. Specifically, the bill authorizes the NPS to use emergency acquisition flexibilities without a presidential emergency or disaster declaration to contract for the following services in such impacted areas: managing or restoring forests, rebuilding structures affected by the fire, improving grounds and structures, conducting recovery efforts, or other specified activities. The bill also authorizes the NPS to enter into noncompetitive procurement contracts for rebuilding, rehabilitating, replacing, or operating assets, such as lodging or utilities, to support the recovery and reopening of the Grand Canyon National Park North Rim. This authority is conditioned upon the NPS making certain determinations regarding the North Rim concessioner and it terminates seven years after this bill's enactment.

House of Representatives Actions

There were no actions by the House of Representatives as the House was in recess during this period.

Other Relevant Department of the Interior News

- *Proposed nuclear data center* - The Bureau of Land Management has received an application from Valar Atomics to lease 9,000 acres of land near Price, Utah, to host 456 small nuclear reactors and data centers. The BLM has stated that it is reviewing the application and “will make sure the public has meaningful opportunities to provide input.” Source: [National Public Radio](#)
- *16 data centers proposed on public lands* - *More Than Just Parks* published [an article](#) cataloging 16 current proposals for data centers on public lands, most of them on land managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Source: *More Than Just Parks*
- *DOI lawyer leaves in protest* - On September 30, John Murdock, an attorney at the Department of the Interior for 18 years, resigned in protest. In his resignation letter, he cited “glaring legal flaws” witnessed during the Trump administration, as well as concerns about oil and gas drilling and the flouting of environmental regulations. Source: [The Guardian](#)

Incidents

Listed alphabetically by park/program.

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Grand Canyon National Park, Yosemite National Park

Lithium battery fires

Unofficial Networks published [an article](#) about lithium battery fires in national parks, citing an audio tour player at Alcatraz in Golden Gate NRA on July 27, and e-bike fires at an apartment in Grand Canyon and at Wahweap Marina in Glen Canyon on July 21 and September 5, respectively. It also cites an electric unicycle explosion at a vacation rental cabin in Wawona in Yosemite National Park in June 2025. The NPS issued a new lithium-ion battery fire warning as part of its Fire Prevention Week, which ran October 4-10. Source: *Unofficial Networks*

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Illegal harvesting

On September 30, the park announced that two individuals were fined for harvesting wild ginseng in the park. One individual was found with 167 poached ginseng roots in their possession, while the other was found with 521 roots. Many of the undamaged roots will be replanted in the park. Source: [WLOS](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Drowning

On October 7, the park announced that a 24-year-old was missing, having been last seen at Riverstone Campground in Townsend, Tennessee, on October 5. Their vehicle was located at Abrams Falls Trailhead on October 7. On October 8, the individual was found deceased, with the family posting that they got caught in the currents at Abrams Falls. Source: [KHOU](#), [WLOS](#), [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)

Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Gulf Islands National Seashore

Hurricane/Tropical Storm Isaías

Two parks experienced closures in anticipation of the landfall of Hurricane/Tropical Storm Isaías:

- Great Smoky Mountains: Newfound Gap Road (Hwy 441) and Balsam Mountain Campground closed on October 9. Source: [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#)
- Gulf Islands National Seashore: Entire park closed on October 7. Source: [Gulf Islands National Seashore](#)

Haleakalā National Park

Hiker fall

On October 9, a 33-year-old took a fall while hiking the Pīpīwai Trail. Personnel from the NPS, Engine 7 (Maui, HI), and Reach Air Ambulance responded to the scene. The individual was found “off of the trail in heavy tree cover.” They were stabilized and carried off the trail, then transferred to the air ambulance, which flew them to Maui Memorial Medical Center. Source: [Maui Now](#)

Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park

Sea arch collapses

Some time between September 23 and 27, the Hōlei Sea Arch collapsed into the Pacific Ocean, likely during a park closure due to Tropical Storm Nolo. The arch had shown signs of instability for many years. Source: [Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park](#)

Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park

Volcanic activity

On October 7, the park closed the Halema‘uma‘u Trail and part of Byron Ledge Trail due to “continued inflation and increased seismicity at the summit of Kīlauea volcano. Over 200 shallow earthquakes occurred below the summit over the prior week, including a 3.4-magnitude quake on September 30 that caused small rockfalls along the north wall of the caldera. Source: [Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park](#)

National Mall and Memorial Parks

Protest rally

On October 4, several dozen individuals gathered at Hains Point in East Potomac Park to rally against efforts to change the East Potomac Golf Course after it was revealed that contracts for

its rehabilitation are being prepared. Source: [WTOP](#)

Pinnacles National Park

Lead poisoned condor

On September 28, California condor #574, also known as Nomad, passed away due to lead poisoning. The individual had been taken to the Oakland Zoo for treatment earlier in the month, but they were too sick to recover. Nomad had nested previously at Pinnacles. Lead poisoning continues to be the leading cause of death for California condors, an endangered species.

Source: [KTLA](#)

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks

Hiker fatality

On October 4, a 52-year-old hiker was found deceased by NPS personnel in “the Mount Whitney Area.” The individual’s body was recovered and removed from the wilderness the following day. No further details were given. Source: [The Fresno Bee](#)

Shenandoah National Park

Hiker fatality

On September 22, human remains were found near a tent in the Naked Creek area of the park. On October 7, the Naked Creek area of the park was closed until further notice. No further details have been released. *[Editor note: The WUSA9 article states that a “wildlife interaction” caused the closure, but no details related to wildlife were included in the text of the article, nor do other sources mention it.]* Source: [WUSA9](#), [Shenandoah National Park](#)

Yellowstone National Park

Horse joins bison herd

In July, a horse escaped from an electric enclosure during a backcountry packing trip in the park. The horse has been seen with a small herd of bison near Slough Creek. Several attempts have been made to recover the horse, but all have been unsuccessful thus far. The park is working with the owner, who hopes snow will push the horse into terrain that is easier for capture. The horse is said to be in good condition currently. Source: [Cowboy State Daily](#)

Yellowstone National Park

Missing dog

On September 10, a group of park visitors left their dog locked in a Canyon Village Campground cabin while they went out hiking. They hung up a “Do not disturb” sign, but cleaning staff opened the door, and the dog escaped. The staff initially chased the dog to attempt to capture it, which led it much further into the wilderness. The dog has been sighted multiple times by staff and visitors and multiple searches have been attempted, but no one has yet been able to capture the individual. Source: [SFGate](#)

Yosemite National Park

Cyclist fatality

On September 11, a 59-year-old was biking in the park when they passed away suddenly. No further details were given about the incident. Source: [Foster's Daily Democrat](#)

Zion National Park

Rockfall

On September 30, a major rockfall hit the Zion-Mt. Carmel Highway, just below the tunnel. The park closed the highway to allow for assessment and repair. On October 6, the park reopened the highway from the East Entrance to the Great Arch overlook. On October 9, the park reopened the rest of the road. Gravel has been placed temporarily in the fall zone and will eventually be repaved. Source: [ABC4](#)

Wildfires

- *North Cascades National Park, Ross Lake National Recreation Area*
 - On June 24, a series of lightning strikes hit the area, causing several fires north of Little Beaver Creek and west of Ross Lake. Of these, the Luna Fire, located east of Big Beaver Creek and north of McMillan Creek, continues burning. As of October 7, the fire was 8,553 acres and 42% contained. Source: *North Cascades National Park* ([7/27](#), [7/31](#), [8/2](#)), [Inciweb](#)
 - The week of July 12, lightning struck the area east of Ross Lake, igniting the Border 1 and Border 2 Fires. As of September 27, the Border 2 Fire was 23,8571 acres and 75% contained. Source: [Whatcom News](#), *North Cascades National Park* ([7/27](#), [7/31](#), [8/2](#), [8/14](#), [8/17](#)), [KING5](#), [Watch Duty](#)
- *Yosemite National Park* - On September 15, an abandoned campfire ignited the Dome Fire north of Wawona Dome, near the Chilnualna Falls Trail. There are no immediate threats to infrastructure. As of October 13, the fire was 6,805 acres and 86% contained. Source: [Watch Duty](#), [Yosemite National Park \(Facebook\)](#), [Yosemite National Park \(nps.gov\)](#), [KCRA3](#)

Follow-ups on Previously Reported Incidents

- *Death Valley National Park* - More than half of Saline Valley Warm Springs Campground reopened following the recent fire (see [9/30/26 Coalition Report](#)). The fire was determined to have started when a propane grill ignited a palm tree. Residual heat and hazardous materials remain in the burn area, and the park is continuing cleanup and recovery. Debris and hazardous materials are expected to be removed in early winter. Source: [Death Valley National Park](#)
- *Lincoln Memorial, National Mall and Memorial Parks* - On October 1, a federal court judge dismissed the case against one individual accused of vandalizing the Lincoln Memorial

Reflecting Pool liner. The case was dismissed with prejudice, which means it cannot be refiled. The judge wrote, “while the prosecutors admit that the evidence indicates that [they] committed no crime, the President’s statements create a risk that [they] will be prosecuted nonetheless, either because the current United States Attorney and assistants will eventually yield to his public pressure campaign or because the President will replace them with prosecutors more likely to carry out his wishes.” (See “Legal Actions” above for information regarding the individual’s pursuit of an investigation from the Offices of Inspectors General about misconduct during the criminal investigation.) Source: [WKYU](#)

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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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