



# The Coalition of National Park Service Retirees

10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Newsletter  
November 2013

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*To study, educate, speak, and act for preservation and protection of America's National Park System*

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## The First 10 Years

**Maureen Finnerty** — *Haymarket, Va.*



As we recognize the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Coalition of NPS Retirees, it is important that we remember and celebrate the past. It is likewise critical that we look to the future to reflect on what the Coalition can become, and how it can expand the breadth and scope of its influence.

For the last decade, the Coalition has largely focused on pursuing its first goal “Protecting and Defending the National Park System.” But, the organization has two additional goals which are just as important “To instill public understanding and appreciation of the origins, purposes and ideals of the Service and System,” and “To initiate or engage in activities that will contribute to, or educate others about, the significant role of the National Park System in a healthy planet.” The potential for the Coalition to have a real impact in these two areas is enormous.

To that end, we are rebuilding our web site to better organize it, make it more interactive, and increase the engagement of our members. We are also making good progress to define,

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and hopefully establish, a “Park Stewardship Institute,” which will elevate the national conversation on the value of parks in and of themselves, and their contribution to our overall quality of life. Retirees can and will contribute to this effort. And, good progress is being made on a Congressional strategy which will help to educate our elected officials and make many of them champions of parks. We are also looking for numerous opportunities to partner with organizations who wish to “spread the good news” about parks.

All of this takes resources. If you agree with these goals, we encourage you to help us financially so that we can continue to do important work. Thanks for your membership and continuing support.

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## How CNPSR Began

**Bill Wade**, *Tucson, Ariz.*

Sitting at home one day early in 2003, I received a phone call from Destry Jarvis. He explained that he’d been contracted by the Rockefeller Family Fund to prepare an analysis on the “assaults” on federal lands, particularly the National Park System, by the Bush administration. He’d completed and presented the report to the RFF and now they wanted to publicize some of the findings.



Destry explained what we all knew — fear of retribution would prevent current employees of the NPS from speaking out. Destry’s idea was to have three knowledgeable retirees appear at a national press conference in Washington, D.C. I agreed to participate and to locate two other retirees to participate. Rick Smith and Mike Finley eagerly bought into the arrangement also.

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## Cultural Resources & CNPSR

**Jerry Rogers** — *Santa Fe N.M.*



The National Park Service has always been a great team and being part of it was a great privilege, but the thing that most struck me upon joining the brand new Coalition of National Park Service Retirees was

how much easier it was to work with my colleagues as retirees than it had been when we were still employed.

The reason, I supposed, was that at any given moment in our careers we all had specific jobs to do and specific priorities and performance standards to meet. I certainly did. As Associate Director for Cultural Resources I was opportunistic in advancing the cause of cultural resources within the Service, cooperating with other NPS interests when I could but being aggressive when it seemed necessary. Of course

we all cared about the whole Service, but we were responsible for specific things. In the Coalition we were all equally dedicated to the whole National Park Service mission.

A certain conference call comes to mind during which a well-known and highly-respected former Superintendent of major parks joked that something must be wrong—he could not remember having agreed so completely with Jerry Rogers ever before!

The Coalition has consistently maintained a broad view. There has been need for cultural resource experience and perspective in that context, but little need for a cultural resource “advocate.” The same, I suspect, may be true for other fields that were specialties during our career years. Many of us have said that we felt lucky to make a living doing things we enjoyed so much and believed in so strongly. For me, the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees has provided a place to continue doing those things in an atmosphere that is even more collegial and mutually supportive than the Service itself. And that is saying a lot. Keep it up.

## Retirees in Name Only

**J.T. Reynolds** — *Henderson, Nev.*



I have been supporting the Lifetime Adventures program since retiring from the NPS in 2009. The program’s mission exposes underserved middle-school students to environments outside their neighborhoods, and promotes outdoor learning and wilderness travel. The program uses indoor and outdoor activities as tools to develop positive social skills that transfer directly to each student’s day-to-day

life. Youth involved in Lifetime Adventures are educated about responsibility, teamwork, trust, problem solving, and decision making. Lifetime Adventures also advocates personal growth, community service learning, and stewardship for the environment. The focus of the after-school program is to provide youth with experiential, hands-on natural science and environmental awareness lessons that focus

on the ecosystems within Nevada and other areas we visit. Field trips to Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area, Desert National Wildlife Refuge, Spring Mountain National Recreation Area, Lake Mead National Recreation Area and other National Park Service areas such as Manzanar, Arches, Channel Islands, Death Valley, and Sequoia provide youth with opportunities to apply lessons learned in the classroom.



## Interview with Molly Ross and Jim Hammett

**Cherry Payne** — *Santa Fe, N.M.*



I recently had a virtual chat with Executive Council members Molly Ross and Jim Hammett. I've known both of them the better part of my career and looked up to them as folks who set the standard when it came to implementing and defending the NPS mission. Though their jobs were quite distinct from one another, you'll see common ideals and values in their responses. It is this common vision that

makes NPS employees some of the best in government. Molly and Jim continue their tireless dedication to the National Park System through the Coalition while enjoying the benefits of retirement.

*What job(s) did you do while working for the NPS?*

**MOLLY:** I spent over 32 years working on park law and policy in Washington, D.C., including stints in the Solicitor's Office, NPS Air Quality Division, the Assistant Secretary's Office, and the Director's Office. WASO duty was made bearable by the great people I worked with and the wonderful resources I worked for. Also, I had some terrific business trips, and a stellar 2-month experience as acting superintendent of Mount Rainier National Park.

**JIM:** I started at North Cascades as a laborer cleaning bathrooms and emptying trash, but managed to move to the trail crew my first summer. In subsequent years as a seasonal, I was the district horse and mule packer, a backcountry law enforcement ranger, and a trail maintenance worker. I managed to get permanent status as a trail foreman after working as a seasonal for 15 years. From there I went to the Denver Service Center as a natural resource specialist, then an outdoor recreation planner/team captain for six years. Then I was selected as superintendent at John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. I never applied for another job and stayed there for 18 years, though I did serve in an acting capacity as the assistant superintendent in Yosemite in the summer of 2009.

*What is your favorite memory?*

**MOLLY:** I experienced many "highs" (and a few "lows"! ) in my park career. I'll never forget the note that Secretary Andrus wrote to me extolling both my legal and culinary skills, after I brought home-made brownies to a celebration of the new Alaska national monuments. More significantly, working on

the establishment of those monuments in 1978, and then working on the establishment of the Chavez, Tubman, First State, and Young monuments in 2012-13, constituted amazing bookends to my career.

**JIM:** There are too many to choose only one: Rescuing an injured climber in North Cascades NP that we expected to find deceased; spending two humbling nights alone on Mount Washington in Great Basin NP surrounded by 4500-year-old bristlecone pines and a startling bright milky way; staring into the gaping mouth of a giant grouper the size of a Volkswagen at Dry Tortugas; having a yearling grizzly sniff my leg on the south side of Denali; watching the sun rise over east Africa from the top of Mt. Kilimanjaro while on detail to Tanzania National Parks. How do you choose among these?

*Why did you join CNPSR?*

**MOLLY:** I joined CNPSR for several reasons. From serving so many years in D.C., I know how important it is to have CNPSR's strong, clear, respected voice speak to both decision-makers and the public on the challenges and opportunities facing the National Park Service. Before I retired, I greatly appreciated CNPSR's professional and energetic efforts on issues like the rewriting of Management Policies and the regulatory reversal of the long-standing firearms policy (ultimately overturned by Congress, unfortunately). Now that I am retired, CNPSR provides a platform for helping to educate and inform about park issues, often in ways that the National Park Service cannot. Membership in CNPSR also enables me to stay in touch with people with whom I have enjoyed working over many years, and to get to know other NPS retirees whom I didn't know well before.

**JIM:** I joined because CNPSR has always been aggressive at defending parks in ways the agency cannot.

*What do you think are CNPSR's most notable accomplishments?*

**MOLLY:** In addition to the issues mentioned above, CNPSR has been influential on such issues as the fate of the commercial oyster operation at Point Reyes National Seashore, winter use at Yellowstone, the harm to parks from (outrageous) legislative proposals on border security, and the impacts of budget sequestration. Beyond its influence on issues, CNPSR has

*Continued on page 4*

## Interview *continued from page 3*

learned how to modulate its tone and adjust its message appropriately to the circumstances, trying to give the National Park Service and park resources and values as much support and voice as possible. And it continues to explore ways to give lasting support to parks, perhaps through a Park Stewardship Institute (now in conceptual stage).

**JIM:** Exposing threats to our parks from the rewrite of the management policies and providing credible media responses to a host of continuing issues that challenge or compromise the national park system.

*What do you see as the biggest issue/threat facing NPS, and how can CNPSR help?*

**MOLLY:** The biggest issue/threat facing NPS is the sustainability of the National Park System in the face of pervasive environmental change, flagging government support, and demographic and generational challenges in visitation. CNPSR can educate and inform about park issues, augment the capacity of the NPS in many areas and occasionally say things that NPS can't say but would like to, talk to legislators about park issues in their home districts and in Washington and state capitals, perhaps help with information coordination and dissemination through a future Park Stewardship Institute, link retirees to opportunities to work with parks and visitors, etc., etc.

**JIM:** I think the biggest threat is the American public taking their park system for granted, and not realizing that they own these parks and that they must help support, defend, and protect them.

*CNPSR is celebrating its 10-year anniversary this year. What do you think it should focus on over the next 10 years?*

**MOLLY:** CNPSR should focus on how to support and enhance the job NPS does to conserve parks unimpaired for this and future generations. And if members of Congress, political appointees, or others try to undermine that mission, CNPSR must be ready to act. As for the specifics of how we do all that, CNPSR should work to secure the funding, membership, and staffing necessary to the task. (Did you expect a simple answer?)

**JIM:** We cannot lose our ability to quickly respond to developing threats – we've proven to be very effective at that.

But we should find a way to catalyze the experience of our members with the needs of parks.

*CNPSR has 915 members representing over 30,000 years of service. How can the organization utilize the expertise and experiences of these folks to support the Coalition's goals and help the NPS?*

**MOLLY:** Most NPS employees are drawn to their park careers and motivated in their work by their love or need for parks. After NPS employees retire, they certainly deserve retirement's pleasures, but they typically still harbor that love/need for parks. CNPSR can provide or help coordinate opportunities for NPS employees to continue working in support of the NPS mission through keeping the district Congressional office informed, helping to introduce new generations and populations to parks in their areas, contributing expertise to CNPSR's analysis on national or regional issues, donating time or funds to helping CNPSR with all these tasks, etc. And as CNPSR gets more donations of time, expertise, and funds, it will be better able to provide and coordinate these opportunities in support of parks. CNPSR is already pursuing broadened programs—e.g., going beyond hot-button issues to develop educational initiatives and a Congressional district information strategy.

**JIM:** As needs arise, we need a method of quickly contacting our base and soliciting that experience. A redesign of our web site should provide for this.

*With no dues, why do you think retirees do not join the Coalition?*

**MOLLY:** First is the problem of notice: making sure that every retiree is aware of the Coalition, and how remarkably reasonable and beneficial membership is. The bureaucratic obstacles to including notice in official retirement communications have been surprisingly daunting. Next, if a retiree has notice but does not join, I would guess the primary reason is "fear of commitment." Therapy is available: members are in total control of how, and how much, they contribute, and just adding their name to our membership list is a significant contribution (enhancing our numbers and our years of experience!). For any retiree reluctant to join based on past CNPSR comments on one thing or another, I would encourage that retiree to consider the overall record (check the website, [www.npsretirees.org](http://www.npsretirees.org)), and understand that CNPSR is always seeking the best ways to educate, inform, and support the NPS and its mission. And don't hesitate to let the Executive Committee know how it could do better!



**JIM:** Some may not because they don't care. Others because they don't agree with some of the stances (or the perception of them) that the Coalition as taken in the past. Others because they want to focus on new adventures and put their years with the NPS behind them. I think the truly green-blooded ones join!

*Biographies*

**Molly N. Ross** — *Arlington, Va.*



Molly recently re-retired after a 15-month "rehired annuity" with the National Park Service to work with the Director on national monument projects. She originally retired in 2010 after a 31-year career in

Washington, D.C., focused on National Park Service law and policy and covering a full spectrum of park issues. She served as Assistant Solicitor for National Parks (2000-2010), Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks (1993-2000), Assistant Chief of the Air Quality Division (1984-1993), and Attorney-Advisor on parks (1978-1984). In retirement, Molly is continuing to work on national park issues, while also taking more time to enjoy friends, family, birds, parks, and her new puppy Teddy (Roosevelt). Molly's husband Peter is an endocrinologist who shares a love for the outdoors, parks, birds, Teddy, and their two "fledged" daughters.

**Jim Hammett** — *John Day, Ore.*



Jim retired in 2012 after working 40 years for the NPS in many capacities. Starting as a seasonal laborer at North Cascades National Park at age 18, he worked his way to Superintendent of John Day Fossil Beds National Monument in Oregon where he served for 18 years. Along the way he completed several extended details to parks in Tanzania, Uganda, and Slovakia. He also served a four-month acting

assignment as deputy superintendent in Yosemite. An avid horseman, hunter and outdoorsman, Jim now spends much of

his time training, hunting and field trialing Brittany bird dogs in the western states with his wife, Pattie.

**Cherry Payne** — *Santa Fe, N.M.*

*(pictured on page 3)*

Cherry spent 34+ years with the NPS, starting out as a park technician at the Bicentennial Information Center in Washington and ending as Superintendent of Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve. Most of her working life was spent as an interpreter. Along the way, she met Bob Howard (at GRTE) and together they managed to work in parks as varied as YOSE (where she met Jim), EVER/DRTO (twice), and SAAN. She also worked on the Trail of Tears and Santa Fe Trails National Historic Trails and for the Water Resources Division (where she met Molly), and the C&O Canal. She retired in 2010, settling in Santa Fe. Cherry and Bob have a daughter Kate, an almost son-in-law, and a galoot of a dog named Toby.



*The Coalition of  
National Park Service Retirees*

Please consider making a contribution to CNPSR so we may continue to advocate. An envelope is included in this newsletter for your convenience. Our tax ID: #20-2002652.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Donation amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you!*

## The Battle to Protect Our First Marine Wilderness Area

**Neal Desai** — *San Francisco, Calif.*

On November 29, 2012, then-Interior Secretary Ken Salazar made a historic decision for our national parks that will benefit generations to come: he designated Drakes Estero as the West Coast's first marine wilderness area, completing a 40-year conservation legacy.

His decision represented government at its best — taking action for the long-term good of our national parks and standing strong when faced with political pressure to do otherwise.

Drakes Estero, a five bay estuary, is considered the “ecological heart” of the Point Reyes National Seashore and provides habitat for tens of thousands of migrating birds and one of California's largest harbor seal colonies.

I became involved in the effort to protect Drakes Estero in 2005. Earlier that year, the Drakes Bay Oyster Company purchased the remaining 7 years of the 40-year commercial oyster harvesting lease from the original owner, with full understanding of the lease's 2012 expiration date. But the company, backed by industry, waged an aggressive campaign against the National Park Service in an effort to overturn the estuary's planned wilderness designation once the lease expired. The politics surrounding the issue heated up considerably when a legislative “rider” in 2009 forced Salazar to reconsider the long-established law to protect Drakes Estero.

Conservation groups around the country, including the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees, weighed in with Salazar, and along with tens of thousands of voices from West Marin to West Virginia, successfully urged him to let the lease expire. World-renowned scientists such as Dr. Sylvia Earle and Dr. E.O. Wilson joined in, understanding the



*Neal Desai (pictured here in Death Valley NP) is the Pacific Region Associate Director, National Parks Conservation Association, and 2013 Honorary Member of CNPSR.*

importance of upholding park policies and protecting sensitive marine ecosystems.

I've hiked along and paddled within the estero. It's a magical place that deserves to be free from noisy company motorboats, millions of non-native oysters, and miles of wooden racks.

In September 2012, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled in favor of the NPS/DOI to deny the Company an injunction to keep operating. Drakes Bay Oyster Co. has appealed to the full circuit court — stay tuned. Though the legal proceedings continue, I look forward to the day when this legendary place, long planned and paid for, will be returned to the public for an unprecedented marine wilderness visitor experience unmatched on the west coast.



*Point Reyes National Seashore*

## CNPSR & the Management Policies

**Rick Smith** — *Tucson, Ariz.*

It started as a rumor in 2005. CNPSR members began to hear through its sources in the NPS that a senior official in the Department of the Interior, Paul Hoffman (a former leader in the Chamber of Commerce in Cody, Wyoming), was proposing a rewrite of the 2001 management policies. NPS Director Mainella claimed that the rewrite contained only a few minor tweaks, but we wanted to assure ourselves that the rewrite was not an attempt by the Administration to change the long-standing tradition that such rewrites were designed simply to update the policies rather than to fundamentally alter the mission of the National Park Service.



We had to get a copy of Hoffman's so-called red-line changes. It took us a couple days but from a source that we will never reveal, we finally got a copy. Our initial reading revealed that the rewrite was far worse than we had ever imagined. Under the leadership of then-Chair Bill Wade, we began our campaign to bury this effort. We sent copies of

individual chapters of the rewrite to CNPSR members or to current employees who had expertise in these areas and asked them to review the chapters and note the changes. We cooperated with NPCA on compiling comments on each chapter. We hired someone to go through the list of NPS employees to get the emails of all the superintendents in the Service and sent them emails detailing the most egregious departures from the 2001 policies. We alerted the press and the environmental community of what was trying to be accomplished "under the table." We testified at a Congressional hearing on the changes. The public reaction was swift and furious. Headlines from newspaper articles contained phrases such as "National Parks: Impaired for future Generations?" "NPS Management Policy Re-write Strongly Opposed by 25 top National Park Executive Team Members."

The small team of NPS employees who had been appointed to oversee the rewrite finally concluded that the task of improving the Hoffman version was impossible and began a complete new rewrite that resulted in the 2006 Management Policies, a version little changed from the 2001 Policies. In many ways, at this time, CNPSR's work on the management policies was the high point of its 4-year campaign to protect and defend the parks and programs of the National Park Service.

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## How CNPSR Began *continued from page 1*

We made our presentations at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., on May 19, 2003. The RFF organizers also wanted a letter to be sent to President Bush and DOI Secretary Gale Norton summarizing our concerns and asking them to withdraw their assault on the NPS and its parks.

Rick, Mike and I spent several hours on the telephone following the press conference getting permission from other retirees we knew and could reach to add their names to the letter. The letter, with 28 signers, and a media release went out later that same day. As reference to the letter showed up in media outlets across the country, we began to be contacted by other retirees asking to be "added" to the letter; which was re-released in July, 2003 with more than 60 signers.

The "groundswell" of interest by retirees was like a hit over the head with a 2x4 for us and we immediately floated the idea of an organization of retirees, to which the response was loud and clear. In the meantime, RFF had formed The Campaign to Protect America's Lands, a non-profit focused on educating the public and elected/appointed officials about the values of protected areas. Our new organization — originally named the Coalition of Concerned National Park Service Retirees — was immediately supported by CPAL, who also advanced our concerns on a regular basis until it, by design, ceased to operate in 2006.

In the meantime, CNPSR, now with 915 members, made the decision to "stay in business" and to incorporate and seek non-profit 501(c)(3) status with the IRS. We incorporated in Arizona in 2006, and the IRS approved our request for non-profit status on June 1, 2007.



## *The Coalition of National Park Service Retirees*

5625 North Wilmot Road  
Tucson, AZ 85750

### Become a Member

*Do you know someone who has retired from or left the National Park Service?*

*Do you know someone who is planning to retire?*

If so, you can help us by speaking with them, giving them a call or shooting them an email to encourage them to join CNPSR. Joining is easy (just direct them to our website, [www.npsretirees.org](http://www.npsretirees.org), and follow the prompts). It's free — no dues and no sign up fee. It's important — we are getting closer to the 1,000 member mark and that number will give us a needed boost in our ability to speak to people who can make things happen. It will also give us additional credibility which in turn can help us raise money to help get our messages across on issues like the effects on parks from the government shutdown, inadequate park budgets, commercial activities on NPS lands, inappropriate uses within parks, and reminders of the value of national parks and park programs to the nation's well-being.

So reach out, do some nudging and help us reach the 1,000 member level.

### Ways You Can Give

The work you accomplished as an employee can continue through support of the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees. While annual contributions are greatly appreciated, please consider the many creative ways to arrange a substantial gift, and in some cases receive a generous tax deduction, including IRA Charitable Rollovers, Beneficiary Designations, Gifts of Stocks, Bonds and Mutual Funds, Life Insurance, or a Charitable Bequest. You can learn about these on our website.

**[www.npsretirees.org/Make-A-Donation.html](http://www.npsretirees.org/Make-A-Donation.html)**

We encourage you to use the enclosed envelope and send a donation today to continue our work (*please see page 5*).