



THE COALITION TO PROTECT AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS

VOICES OF EXPERIENCE

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Membership Update

The Coalition's membership currently stands at 1,832 members.

Website Links

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Coalition Takes Action During the Pandemic

The Coalition continues to advocate for prioritizing the health and safety of our NPS employees, visitors, volunteers, and other partners as we navigate the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. We sent letters to [Secretary Bernhardt](#) and [Acting Director Vela](#) on the need to close national parks. We continue to request the numbers of NPS employees who have tested positive for COVID-19; and the lack of response from the agency has pushed us to file a [FOIA request](#). And as Secretary Bernhardt continues to defend his lackluster response to the pandemic, we [maintain](#) that the Secretary has, "abdicated his leadership role over our national parks by sacrificing the health and safety of our park and concession employees, volunteers, and park visitors for a short-term political benefit." You can read the full list of our actions on our website, linked below.

[Coalition Actions](#)

Concern Over Park Reopenings

Just as the patchwork of park closures lacked national leadership and guidance, all signs indicate that park reopenings will be the same. In response to President Trump's remarks that he would begin to reopen national parks, Chair Phil Francis said, "parks should not open before the safety of National Park Service employees, concessionaires, volunteers and other partners, including those in gateway communities, can be ensured. And not before we have the necessary capacity to protect our resources. This includes adequate staff, personal protective equipment, and employee training. There must be system wide and individual park plans in place, made available to the public, that can be executed prior to reopening."

[Park Reopenings](#)

Amicus Brief Filing

The Coalition and NPCA took legal action this month by filing an amicus brief in the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. The brief supports a challenge to the Trump administration's Affordable Clean Energy (ACE) rule, which fails to set effective limits to reduce carbon pollution from the nation's coal-fired power plants, accelerating and intensifying the effects of climate change on public health and our national parks. We issued a [joint press release](#) with NPCA. Full brief linked below.

[Amicus Brief](#)

Opposition to Energy Extraction

We joined over 90 groups in a [sign-on letter](#) urging Secretary Bernhardt to reject calls by lawmakers for measures to relieve the oil and gas industry of essential obligations to American taxpayers that would do little to preserve jobs. And we issued a [statement](#) on the President's meeting last month with oil company execs, calling out the administration for prioritizing industry interests and refusing to postpone oil and gas lease sales, suspend ongoing public comment periods, or delay a joint letter, linked below. You can also read a joint letter, linked below, sent to Congressional leadership urging them to continue to prioritize the health and wellbeing of the public and reject any bailout for the uranium mining industry in any future COVID-19 emergency response packages.

[Anti Bailout Letter](#)

Success Story!

There is good news to celebrate in a long struggle against the Southern Nevada Water Authority's (SNWA) proposed groundwater pumping and pipeline project in Eastern Nevada, which would have caused significant impact to Great Basin National Park. Following a 30-year battle, the SNWA has decided not to appeal the March 2020 decision by Nevada District Court Judge Robert Estes to deny a significant portion of the water rights SNWA sought for the project, which he said could result in "water mining." Read the full story, linked in the box below.

[SNWA Project History](#)

Ebike Regulations

We sent a [letter](#) to Acting Director Vela requesting that NPS delay initiating the eBike rulemaking process until at least next fall or as long as necessary until the effects of the pandemic begin to subside. Unfortunately, this letter did not change the NPS' course of action. We submitted comments on the proposed ebike regulations, requesting that NPS immediately defer the rulemaking until after the nationwide COVID-19 crisis subsides and until it has prepared a programmatic NEPA review to evaluate potential adverse impacts of the rulemaking. Read our full comments on the proposed ebike regulations below.

[Comments on Proposed Ebike Regulations](#)

Great American Outdoors Act

We continue to advocate for the Great American Outdoors Act, which would provide permanent and full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and address the backlog of deferred maintenance at national parks. In a series of interviews, Coalition Chair Phil Francis said, "the COVID-19 crisis has revealed how essential our national parks and public lands are to all of us. The next stimulus package should include funding for the Great American Outdoors Act so Americans can continue to enjoy our parks once it is safe and the well-being of employees and visitors can be ensured."

[Support of Great American Outdoors Act](#)

Other Actions

Despite all of the COVID-19 related work we've been handling these past few weeks, the Coalition has remained engaged in other advocacy areas. We sent a [letter](#) to Congress regarding S. 2924, the "Bandelier National Park and Preserve Establishment Act." Specifically, we expressed our strong opposition to provisions in the bill that authorize hunting in a portion of the existing national monument. We also signed on to a [letter](#) urging Congressional leadership to ensure that a rider from previous years prohibiting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from considering greater sage-grouse for protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is excluded from the final FY 2021 appropriations bill for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies.

What We're Reading & Tracking This Month

In a recent [op ed](#) for *The Hill*, Coalition members Bill Wade, Doug Morris, and Jim Northup write: "If we want a healthy park system to return to after this pandemic, we must prioritize the protection of our parks and public lands. This means addressing the backlog of deferred maintenance at our national parks and providing full permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. It also means closing our national parks to put the health and safety of NPS employees and visitors first."

Department of the Interior (DOI) Solicitor Edward Keable was [named](#) the new Superintendent of Grand Canyon National Park. The Coalition issued a [statement](#), writing "while Mr. Keable may possess the 'passion' and 'leadership skills' that Acting Director Vela referenced in his statement, it does not mean that Mr. Keable has the knowledge, skills, and ability to be superintendent of Grand Canyon National Park, one of the most high-profile, complex, and heavily visited national park operations in the System."

With many national parks closed, animals are enjoying a break from visitors. But it's important to remember that when the break is over, we should "bring our best selves when we return to visit these national treasures." Check out the [full article](#) from CNN, which features a few quotes from our very own Phil Francis.

We hope you're staying healthy and well! Please don't hesitate to reach out with questions, concerns, or information. [#ProtectOurParks](#)