



THE COALITION TO PROTECT AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS

VOICES OF EXPERIENCE

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Membership Update

The Coalition's membership currently stands at 1,856 members.

Website Links

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Action Alert: Member Sign-On Letter

The **Senate has passed** the Great American Outdoors Act and the House Of Representatives will be taking up the legislation in July. We have drafted a letter of support for this Act, which will provide full and permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and address the \$12 billion maintenance backlog in national parks. If you have not done so, please take a minute and click the box below to sign-on to the letter.

[Sign On Letter](#)

Employment Opportunity

We have been approached by former NPS Deputy Director Peggy O'Dell, who is a consultant for the NOWCC - National Older Worker Career Center. They recruit experienced workers 55+, usually retired federal employees, for several of the departments to fill in gaps - unexpected retirements in a busy program, work surges when sudden funding comes through, mentoring a less experienced person new in a job and similar - when hiring a permanent person is either not necessary or would take too long for the need of the moment. They are a 501(c)(3), they've been around for over 20 years, and they've provided 25 million hours of service to federal agencies in that time.

The employment opportunities are all done through cooperative agreement/task agreements with NPS, Congressionally authorized and paid for out of operations. Hirees are neither employees of NOWCC nor of NPS - they are "enrollees in a federally authorized jobs program." The work varies by the job, but typically is part-time, term, intermittent or otherwise flexible. Hiring is through NOWCC, and will NOT affect your CSRS or FERS annuity. If you are drawing social security and have questions, we encourage you to contact NOWCC for guidance.

NPS currently has over 50 positions all over the country they have asked NOWCC to fill. NOWCC would love to make our members aware they exist. Members who would like a bit of income or are looking for some mental or social interaction and would be interested in getting back into it for short-term work are welcome to contact NOWCC for more information. Click [here](#) or call Beth Stover (303) 238-0497 or Kate O'Dell (303) 242-8668.

NEPA Executive Order

The Coalition issued a **statement** on President Trump's recent Executive Order that will waive the environmental review process for some infrastructure projects, using the pandemic as justification. "The President's recent executive order is not only unnecessary, it represents a real threat to our national parks. While the Coalition supports appropriate response to the pandemic, as well as a stable workforce and economy, we do not agree that our parks should be sacrificed for the "emergencies" envisioned by this Executive Order." Click the box below to read the letter we sent to House Appropriators on this topic.

[NEPA EO Letter](#)

COVID-19 Continues to Impact Parks

The Coalition submitted yet another **FOIA request** to the NPS, asking for the cumulative number of NPS employees with confirmed cases of COVID-19 as of February 29, March 31, April 30, and May 31, 2020; and a simple list of the parks where those cases occurred as of February 29, March 31, April 30, and May 31, 2020. Coalition Chair Phil Francis also **participated** in the Committee for National Resources' Virtual Forum entitled "Not So Grand Opening: Examining Local Perspectives on the Department of the Interior's Plan to Reopen National Parks During the Coronavirus Pandemic."

And while we have found DOI's plan to reopen lacking in organization, safety, and transparency, some parks have taken matters into their own hands. We **sent a letter** to NPS Acting Director Vela to commend Yellowstone National Park Superintendent Cam Sholly, his staff, and local public health partners for their outstanding management and implementation of the park's COVID-19 reopening plan, which includes proactive and weekly COVID-19 surveillance testing of employees which will be shared with the public.

Alaska Advocacy

The Coalition issued a sign-on letter request to former NPS Alaska Superintendents and Regional Directors, asking them to sign their names to a letter sent to Assistant Secretary Wallace in opposition of the final NPS rule regarding hunting and trapping in national preserves in Alaska. We have issued several **statements** and **op-eds** in opposition to this rule, which can be found on our website. The recent sign-on letter is linked below.

[Alaska Letter](#)

Taking a Stand

We issued a **strong statement** denouncing the President's use of force to clear peaceful protesters from Lafayette Park. In the statement, we address the use of USPP, writing, "NPS employees should never be ordered to carry out violent actions against peaceful protesters who are exercising their First Amendment rights protected under the United States Constitution."

In addition, we joined nearly 80 environmental organizations and sent a letter to Interior Secretary David Bernhardt and United States Attorney General William Barr demanding answers about the recent actions of the USPP during ongoing protests in Washington, D.C. Like protests around the country, those in our nation's capital are calls for justice for people of color. Click the box below to read the full letter.

[Letter to DOI](#)

Oil and Gas Lease Sales

The Coalition issued a joint press release with NPCA and SUWA about the Administration's proposal to open up more than 110,000 acres of public land to oil and gas drilling, most of which lies in southern Utah near Canyonlands, Arches and Capitol Reef national parks. "Leasing public land for oil and gas drilling on the doorstep of these national parks will always be a threat to these irreplaceable resources. And right now, there is no good reason for BLM to push through a lease sale as communities across the country continue to deal with the social and economic impacts of the pandemic."

[Joint Press Release](#)

Concern Over Actings

The Coalition continues to engage on the topic of acting positions in the Interior Department. We commented on Interior's latest move to leave temporary leaders in place indefinitely, including acting BLM head William Perry Pendley and acting NPS director David Vela. In an **interview** with *The Hill*, Coalition Chair Phil Francis said, "a person in an acting position oftentimes but not always is just maintaining the day-to-day activities, as opposed to developing and employing a strategic plan, setting a direction for the agency. There are all kinds of benefits of having a permanent employee in place."

Ebikes and Transportation

Last month, we **submitted comments** on the proposed rulemaking for electric bicycles (e-bikes), which supplements our **initial comments** submitted in April.

And in other news - we signed on to a **joint letter** sent to members of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, in support of the Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation in America Act (INVEST in America Act), especially the increased funding levels for federal lands to help address the aging transportation assets in our national parks.

Another Attack on National Monuments

We issued a statement on the President's **rollback of protections** on the Northeast **Canyons and Seamounts** Marine National Monument, a nearly 5,000-square-mile area southeast of Cape Cod. In part, our statement mentions that "an attack on one national monument is an attack on them all and puts in jeopardy the many types of public lands and waters that symbolize America's love for its cultural heritage and great outdoors"

[Statement on National Monuments](#)

What We're Reading & Tracking This Month

Cheryl Schreier, a Coalition member and former Superintendent of Mount Rushmore National Monument, **spoke with *The Washington Post*** about the inadvisability of holding a firework display at Mount Rushmore National Memorial on July 3rd this year.

Speaking of monuments, Secretary Bernhardt has **threatened to withhold funding** from any state or local government that does not adequately protect its monuments, which is in line with the President's recent Executive Order. Bernhardt went on to say that, "the National Park Service is required by law to 'conserve these monuments for future generations.'"

Former NPS Director and Coalition member Bob Stanton was awarded the **Murie Spirit of Conservation Award**. Though retired from the NPS, Mr. Stanton remains incredibly engaged in issues pertaining to our parks and public lands, serving on the board of numerous foundations and associations.

We hope you all enjoy a safe and happy Fourth of July!