



THE COALITION TO PROTECT AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS

— VOICES OF EXPERIENCE —

In This Brief

- [Tracking our Recs](#)
- [Secretary Haaland](#)
- [Oil and Gas](#)
- [USA Hire](#)
- [NPS Campgrounds](#)
- [Park Concerns](#)
- [Congressional Updates](#)
- [Sign-ons](#)
- [Regional Haze](#)

What We're Reading and Tracking

[Support the Coalition with Amazon Smile](#)

Membership Update

[Website Links](#)

[Donate Today](#)



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Membership Update

The Coalition's membership currently stands at 1,904 members.

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- [Update Your Membership Information](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

Tracking Our Recommendations

The Coalition submitted a document to the Biden administration Transition Team after the election, detailing our recommendations and priorities for national parks in the next four years. As actions are taken and legislation or policy passed, we have been tracking the updates. We will continue to work on our priorities for our parks and will keep the updates coming. Click the link below to see the updated version of *This Land is Our Land*.

[This Land is Our Land Updates](#)

A New Secretary of the Interior

We issued a [statement of support](#) for Deb Haaland after her nomination for Secretary of the Interior moved out of committee to a full Senate confirmation vote. We then issued a statement congratulating Secretary Haaland on her confirmation and urging her to work quickly to address numerous areas of concern in the National Park System, including the need for a Senate confirmed Director.

[Support for Secretary Haaland](#)

Oil and Gas Leasing Reform

We signed on to a [letter](#) to support the *End Speculative Oil and Gas Leasing Act of 2021* and issued a [statement](#), saying, "Senator Cortez Masto's legislation is a common-sense reform that will put an end to a leasing policy that regularly threatens our parks, important wildlife habitat, and other iconic places across the West." If passed, the bill would end the practice of leasing low and no potential lands for oil and gas drilling.

The Coalition also signed on to a [letter](#) in support of the *Fair Return for Public Lands Act*, introduced by Senators Rosen and Grassley, that would help ensure that companies are paying their fair share to taxpayers for the use of public lands. In a [statement](#), Coalition Chair Phil Francis said, "America's public lands have been leased to oil and gas companies for pennies on the dollar, at the expense of our treasured outdoor spaces, for far too long. And some of these leases have been on the doorstep of our iconic national parks and monuments."

Finally, we issued a [statement](#) following the DOI virtual public forum on the federal oil and gas leasing program, saying, "we strongly agree with Secretary Haaland's Interior Department; our nation's federal oil and gas leasing system is in need of holistic reform. It is an outdated system that threatens our climate, wildlife, clean air and water, public lands, and national parks."

USA Hire Concerns

The Coalition sent a letter to DOI and NPS expressing concern over the USA Hire Secondary Assessment Tool and requesting a review. We emphasized that while we support a secondary assessment, whatever tool is used must reflect an applicant's competencies and provides hiring officials the highly qualified certificates they need to fill the agency's positions.

[Letter Regarding USA Hire](#)

NPS Campgrounds

We submitted a [letter](#) to NPS regarding the NPS Second Century Campground Strategy. In the letter, we shared our disappointment in what appeared to be a lack of discussion regarding the qualities of a national park camping experience; those tangible and intangible factors that make all the difference between a typical commercial campground and a national park. We also published a [blog post](#) on the uniqueness of NPS campgrounds, linked in the box below.

[Blog Post: NPS Campgrounds](#)

Park Specific Concerns

The Coalition signed on to [comments](#) sent to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources regarding the proposed coastal consistency determination for the [Spaceport Camden](#) project. We also partnered with NPCA in a joint [letter](#) to DOI and NPS regarding several issues of significant concern at Big Cypress National Preserve - including the need for an EIS for the proposed Burnett Oil operations; the pending backcountry access plan/EIS; and ongoing oil and gas threats to the resources of Big Cypress.

Updates from the 117th Congress

With our esteemed *Weekly Report* Editor away from his desk, we're including a rundown of Congressional actions during February and March. Click the link in the box below for the details.

[NPS Related Congressional Actions](#)

A Round Up of Sign-Ons

The Coalition signed on to a series of Second Century Action letters in support of increased appropriations and robust investments in our parks in the upcoming surface transportation or larger infrastructure package. The full text of the letters are linked [here](#).

Regional Haze

We joined our partners at NPCA, Earth Justice, and Sierra Club in filing a [petition](#) urging EPA to reconsider the "Guidance on Regional Haze State Implementation Plans for the Second Implementation Period" and replace it with guidance that comports with the Clean Air Act and the Regional Haze Rule to help states in making progress toward natural visibility conditions at all Class I areas.

What We're Reading & Tracking This Month

The [National Park Service](#) [rejected](#) the South Dakota Department of Tourism's permit request for a July 4 fireworks display at Mount Rushmore, citing "potential risks to the park itself and to the health and safety of employees and visitors associated with the fireworks demonstration." The letter goes on to discuss the park's many tribal partners that expressly oppose fireworks at the Memorial and safety concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic.

[This article](#) in the *New York Times* takes a look at how a small town in the Outer Banks is struggling with the impacts of climate change and the associated costs. Residents of Avon are facing tough questions about the price of saving a town as seas rise and storms intensify. "Based on the science that I've seen for sea-level rise, at some point, the Outer Banks – the way they are today – are not forever," said David Hallac, superintendent of the national parks in eastern North Carolina, including the Cape Hatteras National Seashore, which encompasses the land around Avon. "Exactly when that happens is not clear."

[The Hill](#) reported on a [new study](#) that found that habitat degradation could be made worse by the extinction of predators. Researchers tested how the absence of tiger sharks could affect seagrass coverage in Australia's Shark Bay.

And finally, an [opinion piece](#) from a scientist about another reason to celebrate Taylor Swift; her songs are filled with the language and images of the natural world. "Ms. Swift's songs aren't going to reverse climate change or the decline of wildlife. But they are a step toward reversing the decline of nature in pop culture, and that matters. If we want to change the world to safeguard nature, and ourselves, we first have to see it. Art can do that."