



THE COALITION TO PROTECT AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS

— VOICES OF EXPERIENCE —

In This Brief

- [Stop Lease Sales](#)
- [O & G Actions](#)
- [GAOA](#)
- [Congressional Testimony](#)
- [FOIA Filings](#)
- [Species Protection](#)
- [Concessions Concerns](#)
- [What We're Reading and Tracking](#)
- [Support the Coalition with Amazon Smile](#)
- [Membership Update](#)
- [Website Links](#)

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Membership Update

The Coalition's membership currently stands at 1,878 members.

Website Links

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Stop Oil and Gas Lease Sales

Thank you to all of our members who added their names to the sign on letter we sent to the Department of the Interior (DOI) urging the Department to work with Congress to fix our broken oil and gas leasing system and recommending that they halt lease sales until the pandemic subsides and Americans can fully engage in federal decision-making processes again. Read the whole letter and take a look at the 330 signatures below.

[Oil and Gas Lease Sale Letter](#)

Other O and G News

The Coalition continues to oppose oil and gas lease sales, particularly those on the doorsteps of our national parks. Coalition Chair Phil Francis [commented](#) on the recent oil and gas lease sale that included land in New Mexico, saying, "this jeopardizes not only animal migration and critical species habitat, it puts the irreplaceable natural and cultural resources at Carlsbad Caverns itself at risk."

We also joined our partners in submitting extensive [comments](#) regarding BLM's proposed resource management plan amendment on oil and gas leasing in the Greater Chaco Area.

We issued a [statement in support](#) of Senator Bennet's two bills that will tackle the growing orphaned oil well crisis in the short and long term while restoring robust public participation and Tribal consultation during decisions about whether public lands should be leased for drilling.

Finally, we signed-on to a letter sent to the Department of Agriculture and the US Forest Service requesting that they issue a 90-day extension of the ongoing public comment period for the nonessential Oil and Gas Resources proposed rule, given the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Click the box below to read the letter.

[Extend Public Comment Period](#)

Great American Outdoors Act

The Coalition [sent a letter](#) to Secretary Bernhardt and Congressional appropriators, encouraging DOI to provide for an objective and transparent process of administering funds from The Great American Outdoors Act. Coalition Executive Council member Sheridan Steele submitted an oped in support of the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act to the *Bangor Daily News*, linked below.

[GAOA Oped](#)

Congressional Testimony

Coalition Executive Council Member Jim Northup testified before the House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations' remote oversight hearing, *Police Cameras at the Department of the Interior: Inconsistencies, Failures, and Consequences*. The Coalition believes that the use of both in-car and body cam systems by DOI Law Enforcement Officers and park rangers is imperative to having a law enforcement program that is totally professional, transparent, accountable to and trusted by the public. Read his full testimony below.

[Testimony](#)

FOIA Filings

The Coalition submitted two FOIA requests in September. The [first](#) is a continuation of our requests for COVID-19 infection numbers in the NPS. The [second FOIA request](#) is for information related to the Vice President's recent speech at Fort McHenry National Monument.

The NPS did send a response to our FOIA request regarding the closure of portions of Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial on August 17 to allow for filming of a Republican Campaign advertisement featuring Vice President Mike Pence. The response is linked below.

[LIBO FOIA Response](#)

Species Protection

We joined over 60 other organizations and signed on to [comments](#) prepared by SELC in opposition to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's and National Marine Fisheries Service's proposal to add a new and unnecessary definition of "habitat" to the Endangered Species Act's implementing regulations.

The Coalition also joined numerous other organizations in a [sign-on letter](#) sent to the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee regarding The Endangered Species Act Amendments of 2020, which would fundamentally undermine the ESA.

We also signed on to a letter sent to California officials requesting that they make wildlife movement corridors a priority issue to be addressed in the project design of the XpressWest High Speed Rail Project. That letter is linked in the box below.

[Make Wildlife a Priority](#)

NPS Concessions Regulation Changes

The Coalition has been working closely with our partners at National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) on the proposed changes to the NPS concessions regulations. Several Executive Council members have meet with numerous offices in the House and Senate to discuss the problems with some of the proposals. In addition, we submitted comments emphasizing that while we applaud NPS efforts to improve some aspects of the regulations, the proposed changes to the rules do not appear to be helpful to both the Service and the concessioners. Read our full comments below.

[Concession Comments](#)

What We're Reading & Tracking This Month

Executive Council Member and former NPS Superintendent Sheridan Steele is out with a book about his stories of a career spent serving our national parks. Humorous and poignant, we know it'll strike a chord with our members. Proceeds from book sales benefit the Coalition. Click [here](#) to read more and purchase your own copy!

The Association of National Park Rangers is hosting a [virtual Ranger Rendezvous](#) this year from October 15-18, 2020. Join ANPR to talk about work in the National Park Service, learn about their history, and meet rangers from across the country. Speakers include NPS Deputy Director Shawn Bengel and NPS Associate Director Jennifer Flynn. There will be presentations on stress management, highlights from the 9th World Ranger Congress, and a conversation with partners to include Coalition Chair Phil Francis.

National parks aren't the only ones struggling during the pandemic, budget cuts, and wildfires. Surges in visitation to state parks are testing their staff and resources. Read more [here](#) in this excellent look at the future of state parks by *National Geographic*.

For decades, the stories of BIPOC people (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) have taken a backseat at historic sites across the country. *National Geographic* [takes a look](#) at the path forward, which lies with highlighting accounts of lesser-known figures and increasing diversity in the interpretive workforce.