



Buffalo National River Update

NPCA and the Buffalo National River Coalition continue to seek transparency and input into the public process on issues surrounding the unprecedented permitting of a large swine CAFO (confined animal feeding operation) in the watershed of northwest Arkansas' Buffalo National River. In October, the National Park Service asked the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) to declare Big Creek and two other Buffalo tributaries—Mill Springs and Bear Creek—"impaired," meaning that they are too polluted or otherwise degraded to meet state water quality standards. The National Park Service's policy is to conserve the scenic and scientific features of the Buffalo River as well as to maintain its free-flowing condition for the benefit of people who flock to the river every year to canoe, kayak, swim and fish. Fields along Big Creek's banks are covered with millions of gallons of untreated hog waste from the C&H farm, threatening both surface and ground water. It is particularly troublesome that Big Creek flows into the Buffalo National River at Carver, a popular swimming area and canoe and kayak landing for local residents and park visitors.

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The Fuss About Beach Driving

Since the earliest use of trucks and cars, and before either Cape Hatteras or Cape Lookout were designated by Congress as national seashores (in 1937 and 1966, respectively), humans have used motorized vehicles to travel along the surf's edge. It was a necessity before North Carolina State Highway 12 was built connecting Cape Hatteras' barrier islands. Now it is a recreational choice and not the only way to traverse the barrier islands.

NPCA and allies are trying to protect wildlife and preserve the view and serenity at North Carolina's national seashores. This is particularly challenging because today, off-road vehicles (ORVs) are used for recreation and to haul more equipment than one can carry by hand while walking to the beach. Unfortunately an individual's preferred recreational transportation choice can be fatal to shore bird chicks feeding at the surf line and baby sea turtles attempting to traverse deep tire ruts as they crawl toward the sea. ORVs can also block views and rankle visitors looking for peaceful beach experiences.

In 1972 an Executive Order (E.O. 11644) was issued in response to widespread and

rapidly increasing off-road driving on public lands. While the National Park Service seeks to balance preservation of resources with the public's right to use and enjoy these places, in the end, the mission of the Park Service is to protect these sites for this and future generations. Unfortunately, the use of motorized recreational vehicles such as personal watercraft, snowmobiles, and all-terrain vehicles creates a great deal of tension between park-user groups who call for greater recreational access and those who are concerned about harming the environment and disturbing people in search of quieter pursuits. Today, 12 of the 410 national park units are open to public recreational use of all-terrain vehicles, four-wheel-drive vehicles, and dune buggies.

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Top: Sand dunes on the beach of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore ©Cvandyke | Dreamstime
Right: Banded Piping Plover on Cape Hatteras ©Lindsay Addison

FIELD REPORT

Spring 2016

Southeast Regional Office

Advocating for National Parks in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina

706 Walnut Street • Suite 200
Knoxville, TN 37902
www.npca.org/southeast
865.329.2424 • 800.628.7275

Don Barger

SENIOR REGIONAL DIRECTOR
dbarger@npca.org
865.329.2424, ext 23

Emily Jones

SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER
ejones@npca.org
865.329.2424, ext 26

Chris Watson

PROGRAM MANAGER
cwatson@npca.org
865.329.2424, ext 24

Jeff Hunter

PROGRAM MANAGER
jhunter@npca.org
865.801.0048

Tracy Kramer

SENIOR OUTREACH COORDINATOR
tkramer@npca.org
865.329.2424, ext 21

Design by kelleyalbertdesign.com

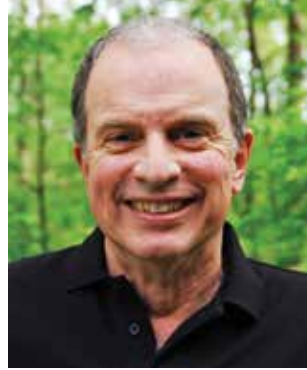


npca.org

Since 1919, the nonpartisan National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. NPCA, its 1,000,000 members and supporters, and many partners work together to protect the park system and preserve our nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage for our children and grandchildren.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE SENIOR DIRECTOR

Our national parks represent a continuum of who we have been and who we are, and they offer us the promise of the insight needed to determine who we should aspire to be. This past November, NPCA identified ten *Parks In Peril* that we are fighting to protect. The future of these remarkable places may very well depend on actions that



President Obama can take administratively during his remaining time in office. The administration has already taken one such step, denying a permit to a company seeking to construct a giant commercial development near the Grand Canyon—giving us our first Parks in Peril victory! Other successes are near, including one on national forest land adjacent to Glacier National Park, where the government recently cancelled a 30-year-old oil and gas exploration lease. But we are close to losing some battles. We are concerned about a giant industrial solar plant set to open in prime habitat for desert tortoise and bighorn sheep next to Mojave National Preserve and about power lines that could tower over Colonial National Historic Park on the James River, ruining its historic vistas. I hope you will go online (at the link

below) and encourage the administration to protect our natural and cultural heritage.

The last entry on this list of ten is this region's Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area. In 2010, the State of Tennessee filed a formal administrative petition with the Department of the Interior's Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation and

Enforcement (OSM) to designate hundreds of miles of ridgelines in the State's North Cumberland Wildlife Management Area as "unsuitable for surface coal mining." This important designation in the mountainous headwaters of Big South Fork would help protect ten federally threatened or endangered species of mussels and one federally listed species of fish in the park's streams. At the end of February, OSM closed the public comment period on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, and it is now moving toward making a decision on the state's petition by year's end. Many voices, including many NPCA members' voices, were raised in support of this landscape-level conservation effort by the state of Tennessee. Now it's up to the administration to finish the work and secure the future of this magnificent national river.

**Your voice can, once again, make a difference.
Visit <https://www.npca.org/parksinperil> to learn more.**





The Fuss About Beach Driving

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Six of the ten national seashores allow off-road vehicle use to varying degrees. Two of those six are in North Carolina at Cape Hatteras and Cape Lookout National Seashores.

At Cape Hatteras National Seashore, the controversy between user groups and resource protection has risen to the Congressional level. With the passage of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2014, a provision was inserted that charged the park with reviewing and revising off-road-vehicle policies that were originally put in place in 2012 after years of public input, a completed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and negotiated rule making between park user groups. Off-road vehicle users' desire for greater ORV access comes at a cost to visitors from the region, across the country and around the world who want to visit vehicle-free beaches and experience a natural, quiet seascape. Currently, over half of the seashore's 67 miles is open to ORV use during certain times of the year and, during peak tourism season (even with wildlife protection buffers) approximately a third of the beach is open to ORV use. It is pertinent to note that tourism and rare turtles nesting at Hatteras have been on the rise since the 2012 policies were put into place.

Top Left: Green sea turtle covering its nest. ©National Park Service **Bottom:** Baby sea turtles boiling out of their nest. ©National Park Service **Top Right:** Freshly hatched Black Skimmer chicks. ©Lindsay Addison

At Cape Lookout National Seashore, the controversy around ORVs is heating to a boil. Cape Lookout has had few rules or regulations around beach driving until now. In 2014, the Park Service drafted an Environmental Impact Statement, and recently released proposed ORV regulations that would require drivers to get an ORV permit to drive on the beach. NPCA and its members, along with the Southern Environmental Law Center, Audubon, and Defenders of Wildlife have asked the Park Service to complete the EIS before issuing a final rule about beach driving at Cape Lookout.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Educate your Congressman on the importance of protecting wildlife habitat, especially in our national parks, which are hot spots for biodiversity and important to the survival of migrating birds and marine life. Ask them to protect the national park experience and quieter recreational pursuits such as birdwatching, hiking, kayaking, and beachcombing. There are many places along the Atlantic Coast where beach driving is allowed for recreational purposes, but few where migrating and nesting wildlife are protected.

Call for Volunteers

Cape Hatteras Clean Up Day

On June 22, 2016 NPCA volunteers and members will assist staff at the National Seashore with a beach clean-up on Bodie Island from 9-11 am. To sign up, please contact Emily Jones at 865 329-2424 ext. 26 or email us at southeast@npca.org.

Cape Hatteras Science Workshop

In June, the Park Service will hold a series of public science workshops to ensure that current research and monitoring activities are effectively measuring the impact of human use of beaches on nesting wildlife. Workshop leaders will discuss ideal future conditions, trends in wildlife nesting success, and factors affecting success and use of habitat. They also will put forward a plan with recommendations for future monitoring and research. If you are interested in participating, please contact Emily Jones at 865-329-2424 ext. 26 or email us at southeast@npca.org and we will share the dates for these workshops when they are announced.

A Conservation Light from the Darkroom

During this harried election season, I am taking the time to think about someone who made his name, cut his teeth, and found his purpose on the trails of the High Sierra. This is a person who then descended those wooded slopes and glacier-carved valleys carrying images of such undeniable beauty that they shaped the ethos of generations to follow. Ansel

Adams. His name conjures a conservation spirit mighty and wild as a sequoia. His images transfixed America and helped rebrand the American West as a land of intense wildness and beauty. He positioned the West as a source of pride for all Americans, no matter where they lived. People who had been separated from the land by time or distance found or remembered that

fundamental connection to the elemental world through his photographs.

The light of Adams' remarkable work, effort, and accomplishments did not filter down to me, or my neighborhood, or my peers in rough and tumble Lauderdale, Florida. Many years later, at age 28, I saw a sequoia for the first time, and experienced the brilliant light, craggy rocks, and wild heart of the Sierra Nevada. As both a photographer and a conservationist, I began to understand the greatness of what had been accomplished in the Sierra Nevada and beyond by Ansel Adams, David Brower and their contemporaries. They taught me that we each should stand as tall as we can in our time and place, and endeavor to create works that last. That sometimes nature uses a camel hair brush to create beauty, and sometimes it uses a chisel and hammer. That work is timeless, takes eons, and is never completed. Adams, and many who have followed passionately in his footsteps, are telling the stories of those places and why they matter. Many of us who are artistically inclined connect to Adams' work, and perhaps more importantly, we are drawn to wild lands and work to protect them for the same reasons Adams was.



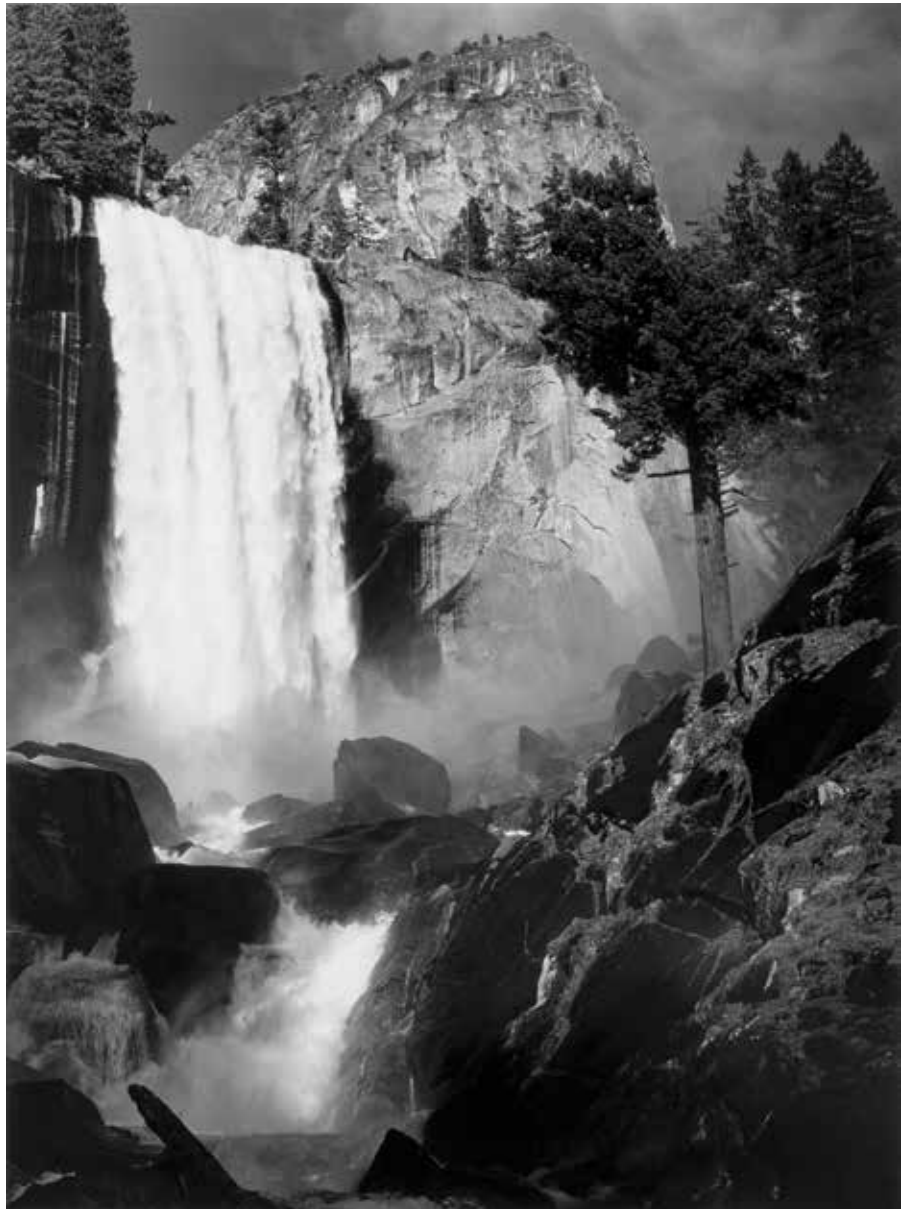
Top Left: David Lamfrom ©Rana Knighten 2008 **Top Right:** Desert Bee in sage in Mojave National Park ©Lea Paige **Bottom Right:** TTL students photograph a young male tortoise in Mojave National Park. © Rachel Wilson **Bottom:** Tortoise on the move in the Desert Tortoise Natural Area. ©Rachel Wilson

These values led me to develop and lead a program for NPCA called *Tortoises Through the Lens*. We taught high school students about wildlife photography, gave them cameras, and helped them explore the California desert. The students wrote and published a conservation photo book about the desert tortoise that featured the beautiful photos they had taken over several years. The students learned about Adams and more contemporary photographers, including those at the International League of Conservation Photographers.

Adams spent time exploring and photographing the California desert and the parks and monuments there, including the area that is now Manzanar National Historic Site. I took the students to see the sequoia; for all of them, it was their first time. They were as moved as I was, and many of those students are still fighting to protect the desert and the wild world years later.

Reynolda House Museum of American Art in Winston Salem is featuring an exhibit of Ansel Adams' work, **Ansel Adams: Eloquent Light**, through July 17. The exhibit of both famous and lesser known works includes many outstanding images of national parks and it is the first time that this group of photographs has ever been shown together. NPCA and the museum hope that you will visit the exhibit before it closes and experience firsthand how Ansel Adams was indeed a 'conservation light in the darkroom'.

David Lamfrom is NPCA's California Desert and National Wildlife Program Director.



SOLD OUT! **Ansel Adams, Photography & Advocacy: An Evening with the National Parks Conservation Association** will be held at the Reynolda House Museum of American Art in Winston Salem, NC, on Thursday, April 28, 2016 from 6p to 8p.

From April 29 thru July 17:

NPCA members may "Bring a Friend for Free" with each paid Adult admission by presenting this Field Report. NPCA is proud to be the National Outreach Partner for the Ansel Adams: Eloquent Light exhibit.

Right (Top): Vernal Fall, Yosemite Valley, California, ca 1948. Photograph by Ansel Adams ©2015 The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust **Bottom:** Sunrise, Mount McKinley, Mount McKinley National Park, Alaska, 1948. Photograph by Ansel Adams ©2015 The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust





Speak up for
National Parks

America has more than 400 national parks protecting some of our most important cultural and historical sites and our most iconic landscapes. We hike their trails, boat their waters, wander their museums and learn about some of the most pivotal moments in our country's history. Yet these places are facing very real challenges, from encroaching development to climate change to years of underfunding. And they need our help.

National Parks Conservation Association has launched **Find Your Voice**—an initiative to encourage people to be both national park visitors *and* national park advocates. Through community service events, speaker series and advocacy trainings, NPCA is working to educate, engage and empower people to speak up for America's favorite places so they can thrive well into their next century.

For more information about the initiative and activities near you, please visit www.FindYourVoice.camp.



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Great Smoky Mountains National Park
©Daveallenphoto | Dreamstime

Meet Our New Staff Member

In November 2015, Jeff Hunter joined the team at NPCA's Southeast Regional Office as our new Southern Highlands Living Landscape Program Manager. Although Jeff relocated from California's Eastern Sierra, he's no stranger to the Southeast. He worked for the Asheville-based Wild South for six years, where he led the Tennessee Wild wilderness campaign, focused on permanently protecting nearly 20,000 acres of forests and streams in the Cherokee National Forest. Previously, Jeff worked in a partnership position with the American Hiking Society and the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program (RTCA) in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Prior to that, he had a 20-year career with Verizon.

Jeff's responsibilities include identifying emerging issues and crafting new park protection initiatives focused on our Southern Appalachian parks: the Blue Ridge Parkway, Appalachian National Scenic

Trail, Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and others. Jeff is also leading NPCA's effort to make sure that neighboring national parks in the Southern Appalachians are receiving sufficient consideration in the ongoing forest planning process being conducted by the USDA Forest Service.



"I couldn't be more excited to join the team at NPCA," Hunter said. "For my entire life, I've been a visitor to America's national parks, and now I have the chance to work alongside a team of conservation professionals to protect these special places." Some of his favorite parks include Yellowstone, Yosemite, and of course, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, as well as some of the lesser known gems like Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. "The Southeast is a globally significant region for biodiversity. Whether we're talking about birds, amphibians, trees, or fish—the Southeast is teeming with life. It's an honor to be able to work to protect that natural legacy for future generations."

Jeff is currently based out of a home office in Hot Springs, North Carolina, where he lives with his wife, Caara. If you travel to Hot Springs, you just might see them out on the Appalachian Trail with their dogs Abbey and Shadow.

Buffalo National River Update

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The Buffalo is our nation's first National River and a unit of the National Park System. In March 2016, the United States Department of Agriculture's Farm Services Administration (FSA) and the Small Business Administration (SBA) asked the federal court to reinstate loan guarantees backing C&H Hog Farm, Inc. The request came after the two agencies were found in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations and ordered to conduct a new Environmental Assessment. Unfortunately, their new assessment ignored geological science provided by both federal agencies and hydrogeologists that indicated that the millions of gallons of waste from 6,500 hogs could impact the National River, the experience of park visitors and endangered wildlife that depend on sustainable habitat and clean water.

While we are disappointed in the federal agencies' decision to issue a "Finding of No Significant Impact" in our NEPA lawsuit, we are not surprised. We are deeply grateful for the outstanding legal work on this claim provided by counsel at Earthjustice and Earthrise, as well as by our Arkansas counsel, Hank Bates. While we won the NEPA claim in court, in the end, the agencies who provided the loans to C&H Farm were charged with taking a "hard look" at the impact of C&H Farm, Inc. and procedurally they have met that obligation.

On a side note, C&H Hog Farm, Inc. is no longer producing pork for Cargill. Cargill's pork division was purchased in 2015 by JBS, a Brazilian-based corporation which is the largest animal protein company in the world.

C&H's National Pollution Discharge and Elimination System permit is up for renewal this year. Arkansas's Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) has indicated that they intend to renew that permit. NPCA and our allies continue to push ADEQ to be transparent so that citizens can better understand how the department works to keep Arkansas' waters safe. Our concern continues to be for the national river, its unique habitat and the growing tourism industry that depends on visitors to rent cabins, canoes and kayaks, and patronize related tourism businesses in the area. You can raise your voice to protect the Buffalo by going to npca.org to sign up for our e-news and Action Alerts on this important issue.



Top: Exploring on the bank of the Buffalo National River. ©Micheal Dougherty **Bottom:** Gabriel Gray paddles past some of the Buffalo River's majestic limestone cliffs. ©Gabriel Gray

What's SUP on the Buffalo?

In mid-April, NPCA, the Buffalo National River Partners, and Lost Valley Canoe hosted **Stand Up Paddleboard (SUP)** workshops for university students attending the **Arkansas Adventure Programming Conference**, a student-oriented weekend for individuals who want to connect with other outdoor enthusiasts. The workshop featured Gabriel Gray, a SUP expert and founder of Save Our American Rivers, who shared information on SUP safety, techniques and expeditions, and discussed the ethics and practices of being a good river and outdoor steward. In addition to the student-based SUP workshops, NPCA also hosted two public workshops with Gabriel Gray as part of the National Park Centennial Celebration at Buffalo National River.





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A large bird with a dramatic bill, the American Oystercatcher feeds on oysters, clams and mussels, stabbing its knife-like bill into open bivalves to sever the adductor muscle and eat the soft parts.
©Lindsay Addison



Music in the American Wild

A unique celebration of the National Park Service centennial is bringing new music to our national parks. Organized by Emlyn Johnson, **Music in the American Wild** is a group of 11 young composers and seven performers, affiliated with the Eastman School of Music, who have come together to fill our country's grandest natural venues with a new opus of inherently American music. During the summer of 2016, performers will play these musical compositions in national parks, premiering them in the amazing places that inspired their creation. From caves, to mountaintops, to forests blanketed with fireflies, Music in the American Wild will honor this major milestone in American conservation by letting new music ring out from sea to shining sea! The performance dates in the Southeast are:

JUNE 11-12 Mammoth Cave

JUNE 14 Purchase Knob at Great Smoky Mountains

JUNE 15 Cades Cove at Great Smoky Mountains



For more details and additional dates, go to
www.musicintheamericanwild.com.

