

# TRUSTEES FOR THE PARKS

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2020



*Oil pump along the front range of the Colorado Rockies with Longs Peak on the left.*

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*Well pads on Little Missouri River which flows through Theodore Roosevelt National Park (ND)*

(c) Chris Boyer, Kestrel Aerial Services, Inc.

## NOT A PRETTY PICTURE

*Oil and gas development threatens parks nationwide*

**N**PCA's latest *Spoiled Parks* report spotlights 12 national parks most at risk of permanent damage from rampant oil and gas development.

The images and information in our report do not paint a pretty picture — oil wells encircling Theodore Roosevelt National Park, air pollution from drilling activities endangering visitors to Rocky Mountain National Park and pipelines fragmenting wildlife habitat for species that migrate into Grand Teton National Park.

This grave and growing threat results from the Trump administration leasing public lands for oil and gas exploration at a breakneck pace. In just three years, nearly 24 million acres of public land — including national park

landscapes — have been offered up for energy development. That is an area larger than the state of Indiana, and it continues to increase with new leases being offered every three months.

In addition to rapidly expanding public land leasing, the administration is rolling back critical protections for air, water and wildlife while eliminating opportunities for the public to comment on leasing decisions. It all adds up to energy industry interests being prioritized over the American people and the future of our national parks.

### Going Once, Going Twice ... Gone

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM)'s quarterly auctions of public land leases now include practically

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- WILDERNESS VS. THE WALL
- KEEPING PULLMAN ON TRACK



**Big Cypress National Preserve** provides crucial habitat for a diversity of wildlife, including the last 230 surviving Florida panthers. That habitat is being severely impacted by oil and gas operations within the park's boundaries.

every parcel of land suggested by industry. In many cases, land that belongs to the public is being leased for only two dollars per acre. Rock bottom prices and virtually free rein to drill without environmental protections is a great deal for oil and gas companies. But it could do irreparable harm to every national park targeted for energy exploitation, including the 12 featured in *Spoiled Parks* (see list at right).

### Preventing Irreparable Harm

Current oil and gas leasing policies have left scars on landscapes that will never be the same and threaten future damage to air and water quality, cultural heritage, wildlife and local tourism economies. NPCA Director of Energy and Landscape Conservation, Matt Kirby, emphasizes the urgent need for policy change because, "The number and severity of actions this administration is taking against our public lands is putting our national parks in a situation from which they may never recover."

Our *Spoiled Parks* report goes beyond highlighting the problems that come

with reckless oil and gas development to offer solutions which can avert permanent damage to national parks. NPCA is calling on administration officials and park champions in Congress to:

- Reform the leasing process to ensure national park landscapes are unharmed by oil and gas development;
- Give the National Park Service and "we the people" a greater voice in leasing decisions that affect parks;
- Curtail fossil fuel extraction from public lands to mitigate the impacts of climate change; and,
- Strengthen keystone conservation laws including the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act.

NPCA has a long history of forging strong bipartisan support for national parks. Although the current political climate is one of the most challenging in our 101 years of park activism, we

remain cautiously optimistic that our country's energy needs can be successfully met without sacrificing the national parks so they can be enjoyed by today's visitors and for generations to come.

A big reason for optimism, as always, is the leadership support of NPCA Trustees for the Parks who make all our park-protection efforts possible.

**Visit [npca.org](http://npca.org) to review the full *Spoiled Parks* report, updates on new oil and gas leases and opportunities to make your pro-parks voice heard.**

### Twelve National Parks Featured in *Spoiled Parks*:

- Sequoia National Park (California)
- Mesa Verde National Park (Colorado)
- Rocky Mountain National Park (Colorado)
- Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve (Colorado)
- Dinosaur National Monument (Colorado/Utah)
- Big Cypress National Preserve (Florida)
- Carlsbad Caverns National Park (New Mexico)
- Chaco Culture National Historical Park (New Mexico)
- Theodore Roosevelt National Park (North Dakota)
- Hovenweep National Monument (Colorado/Utah)
- Canyonlands National Park (Utah)
- Grand Teton National Park (Wyoming)

# Gratitude & Resolve

Amidst the awe and beauty of the spring season, we find ourselves in a global health crisis. Everyone at National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) hopes that you and your loved ones are well and staying safe.

Like so many organizations across the country, NPCA put measures in place to dramatically reduce COVID-19 risk to our staff and volunteers, including asking all staff to telework and canceling all events until further notice. Everyone's safety is our paramount concern, including the safety of national park visitors, staff and neighboring communities.

As I write this, many of our country's largest national parks are still open, and they are seeing thousands of visitors seeking refuge. Unfortunately, instead of the social distancing, they are finding social crowding. As we support national park superintendents who are making the decision to temporarily close their parks, we also ask all potential park visitors to delay their trips until a time when it's safe to visit them once again.

While we enjoy our parks from afar, we can still fight for them too, because the threats persist even during

a global health crisis. Oil rigs and pipelines are being proposed next to and within park boundaries, bedrock conservation laws are being weakened or eliminated and dozens of protections for wild land and rare species are being ignored to speed border wall construction.



Through all this, we will persist with your dedication to NPCA, our mission and our national parks.

We at NPCA appreciate your ongoing support during this unprecedented time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Theresa". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Theresa Pierno  
President & CEO

*Grand Teton National Park (WY)*  
© Jindong | Dreamstime.com



# PARK PROTECTIONS GUTTED

## Cutting the public out of public lands decisions

**F**or the last 50 years government agencies have had to consider public health and the environment before permitting projects on federal lands that, by definition, belong to the American people. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a long-standing law that requires environmental review of projects and gives us a voice in how our public lands are being used.

Our voice could soon be silenced, and our national parks exposed to ruinous projects, by draft regulations from the White House that would severely undermine NEPA.

NEPA is one of the last few remaining laws that require climate change impacts to be considered in the federal permitting process. The proposed weakening of this law would have significant negative implications for national parks, including:

- Limiting the time needed to complete environmental reviews and public involvement;
- Putting people in communities already suffering environmental degradation at even greater risk by limiting protections for clean air and water; and,

- Restricting the federal government's ability to take substantive action to combat climate change.

NPCA President and CEO, Theresa Pierno, didn't mince words when describing the attacks on NEPA and their inevitable results:

“This move is nothing more than another attempt to tip the scales in favor of industry. Our parks and all who visit them will pay a terrible price. Rising sea levels, melting glaciers, and intensifying storms and wildfires are already destroying our national parks.

“This attempt to ignore years of science-driven data will only make matters worse. We need solutions to the climate crisis now, not ‘reforms’ that make it easier to stick our heads in the sand.”

It is important to note that the administration's relaxed NEPA regulations are still at the draft stage. That means NPCA still has time to rally public opposition to the regulations. But time is getting shorter each day, and industry special interests are pushing hard to get their way.

**Stay up to date on this issue at [npca.org](https://www.npca.org).**

*Karen Jones, NPCA supporter, and Tracy Coppola, NPCA Colorado Program Manager, attended a Denver rally to protect the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) from proposed rollbacks by the Trump Administration.*



Glacier National Park (MT)

© Donald Fink | Dreamstime.com

# WILDERNESS VS. THE WALL

**B**order security is a critical issue, which is why it is so important to get right. NPCA supports solutions that keep our country safe without destroying our invaluable heritage, cultural resources and values. And we will continue to oppose border wall construction that destroys public lands like Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument and divides communities and neighborhoods.

A last-minute deal on the federal budget for 2020 included \$1.4 billion in new funding for the wall at the southern border. The wall, which is currently under construction despite numerous lawsuits, is already destroying a national park and critical wildlife habitat.

Bighorn sheep, desert tortoises and dozens of other species will be unable to move freely through the landscape if the wall is completed as planned.

Saguaro cactus, a national symbol of the desert, are being bulldozed and cleared into slash piles, a process that is quicker and cheaper than relocating and replanting them.

Also, Organ Pipe Cactus is part of the traditional homelands of the Tohono O’odham Nation, whose chairman and members have expressed outrage at the construction of the wall, the destruction of the saguaro, and the clearing of land which has unearthed Native American graves.

More can be done to improve U.S. immigration systems and border security. However, walling off our national parks and border communities is not the answer. We instead need to look for solutions that keep our landscapes and communities intact.

**Read more on our blog at [npca.org/organpipeborderwall](https://npca.org/organpipeborderwall)**

*Photos top to bottom:*

*A bulldozer uprooting native vegetation at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, October 1, 2019. © Kevin Dahl/NPCA*

*Bighorn sheep are just one of the species threatened by the border wall. Photo by Andrew Cattoir.jpg*

*Recently cleared vegetation at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. © Kevin Dahl/NPCA*



# KEEPING PULLMAN ON TRACK

## Maximizing the benefits of Chicago's first national park

Establishing a new national park doesn't mark the end of NPCA's involvement in enhancing that new national treasure. It is actually only the beginning. Such is the case with Pullman National Monument on Chicago's far South Side.



Pullman National Monument (IL)  
© Thorsten Hillert for NPCA

The Pullman neighborhood is an historic landmark that was once at the center of industry and workers' rights in America. Built by industrialist George Pullman in the late 19th century, Pullman produced the first luxury rail cars and housed many of the workers who built them.

Architectural gems in the Pullman district include the Pullman Car Company's Administration Building with its distinctive clock tower and the Hotel Florence, which included the only bar in town when it opened in 1881. The Pullman Company was the genesis of the first African American labor union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, which won collective bargaining rights in the 1920s and whose founder, A. Philip Randolph, was a key player in the civil rights movement.

The neighborhood's historic significance and committed residents led NPCA, elected officials, people in Chicago, and many others across the country to establish protected national park status for Pullman. Our diverse coalition of stakeholders celebrated the designation of Pullman National Monument in 2015.

Five years later, we remain at work ensuring the improvements at Pullman benefit visitors and residents alike.

### All Aboard for Next Steps

*Positioning Pullman*, a community-driven strategy led by more than 40 volunteer design, planning, and engineering professionals and launched shortly after the designation, served as an initial blueprint for development

and improvements to the new national monument. More than half of the 33 projects outlined in that plan have been completed or are now underway. More than \$56 million of public and private funding has been invested within Pullman National Monument in five short years. Our collaborative strategies have also been recognized with eight national, regional and local awards for excellence.

*Positioning Pullman 2.0* aims to keep a strong group of national park advocates motivated and expand on successes by identifying a next tier of projects and connect Pullman National Monument to nearby attractions and natural areas. Priorities for the next phase of NPCA's work at Pullman include:

- Completing priority renovation of the major historic assets in Pullman, such as the unique Greenstone Church;
- Connecting north and south Pullman through green spaces to unify the neighborhood and provide a cultural trail to tell the Pullman stories; and,
- Expanding access to nearby natural and cultural areas like Big Marsh and Beaubien Woods with bike and walking trails.

NPCA Midwest Senior Regional Director, Lynn McClure, who spent years building support for the Pullman designation, is quick to praise all the community partners who continue working together to make Pullman all it can be. "Since the launch of *Positioning Pullman*," Lynn says, "it has become a guide for collaboration in urban national parks across the country. With the commitment of so many people who live in and support Pullman, we are seeing the results and that demonstrates the power that this national park brings to Chicago and the region."



Left to right: NPCA Senior Director Lynn McClure; Greater Roseland Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Andrea Reed, Roseland Heights Community Association member, Clevan Tucker Jr.; and National Park Service project manager, Phil Lawrence

# INTERNS WITH IMPACT

*Putting national parks in good hands*

**N**PCA's Summer Intern Program gives college students and recent graduates the chance for firsthand learning about our work and to take an active role in protecting their national parks.

Interns work on a wide range of projects — from documenting the impacts of increasing visitation on park resources, to researching wildlife and plant health in parks, and solidifying support for the parks in Congress. It can be hard work, to be sure. But there is also plenty of fun to be had getting “up close and personal” with the wonders of national parks. And the good feeling that comes with making a difference in and for the parks is one that lasts well past the summer.

Internships are available in NPCA's national office in

Washington, DC as well as our regional offices around the country. Tomorrow's biologists and climate scientists, resource managers and public policy advocates, lawyers and anthropologists are all welcome to apply for internships.

We salute all of last summer's interns for their accomplishments and look forward to another summer of impact with a new group of dedicated park protectors.

If you are interested or know of someone who is interested in looking out for national parks while gaining valuable experience to improve their career outlook, please encourage them to visit <https://www.npca.org/careers> to see full intern position descriptions and find instructions on how to apply.





Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument (AZ)  
© Ian Shive

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# NATIONAL PARKS: YOURS TO ENJOY AND PROTECT

**THANK YOU** for playing a vital role in protecting your national parks. As an NPCA Trustee for the Parks, you are part of a special community on the forefront of parks advocacy and conservation. You can continue your support with a special gift today at [www.my.npca.org/newsletter](http://www.my.npca.org/newsletter)

Enjoy the national parks you love from the safety of your home through virtual visits. Visiting the parks from home won't match the majesty of seeing them in person, but they can keep you inspired and help you plan your next trip when conditions are safe again.

Start your virtual park adventure at one of these sites:

[www.npca.org/lovingtheparks](http://www.npca.org/lovingtheparks)

[www.artsandculture.google.com](http://www.artsandculture.google.com)  
(search national parks)



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