



Biscayne National Park (FL)

© NPS/Shawn Wolfe

Time is running out
for marine wildlife
that once thrived in
Biscayne's waters.



LAWSUIT TO SAVE BISCAYNE NATIONAL PARK

NPCA Lawsuit Seeks End to Conservation Delays

It took more than 15 years for the National Park Service (NPS) to decide on a plan to protect Biscayne National Park's marine wildlife and habitat against the ravages of overuse and commercial fishing. Nearly six years later, NPS's continued delay has put this magnificent underwater treasure at an even greater risk.

NPCA, represented by the law firm of Arnold & Porter, is now in court working to end conservation delays and finally get the park on a path toward recovery.

Filing a lawsuit against the National Park Service and the Department of the Interior (DOI) was called for because

NPS has failed to implement the exact management decisions it made years ago and deemed necessary for sound park protection: namely, the decisions to phase out commercial fishing in the park and implement a no-fishing marine reserve zone.

Over many years, divers, boaters and world-renowned anglers have witnessed the decline in Biscayne's iconic reefs firsthand. This decline threatens the health and sustainability of Biscayne's irreplaceable marine ecosystems, as well as the tourism economy that the park supports in South Florida. Many reef fish species in Biscayne's waters are overfished

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Boca Chita Key Lighthouse, Biscayne National Park (FL)
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and on the verge of collapse. Current coral populations are a fraction of what they once were, with elkhorn coral in particular listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

Unique and Uniquely Valuable

Biscayne National Park protects part of the third largest barrier reef system in the world. It provides important habitat for wildlife including sea turtles, lobsters, manatees and rays. The park also harbors the longest stretch of mangrove forest remaining on Florida's east coast.

Biscayne also draws people from around the world for unparalleled diving, snorkeling, wildlife viewing, boating and other recreational pursuits on and under the water.

Environmental and economic concerns prompted NPCA's Sun Coast Region and our community partners, divers, recreational fishers and concerned citizens — including more than 20,000 NPCA supporters — to press NPS to create a protected marine reserve zone and begin phasing out commercial fishing in the park. NPS officials agreed to take those steps in 2014 and 2015.

But that promise has yet to be fulfilled, making NPCA's lawsuit necessary.

A Long Overdue Solution

The long-delayed marine reserve zone would cover less than 10% of Biscayne's 173,000 acres, 95% of which encompass water. The marine reserve zone should be established based on NPS' 2015 Record of Decision which specified that a no-fishing marine reserve was needed. Before making their decision regarding the marine reserve zone in 2015, NPS had already announced its additional plan to institute a permitting system to gradually phase out commercial fishing across the park, allowing those currently fishing commercially to continue but preventing new commercial fishing operations from becoming established.

Studies in marine reserves that are already established elsewhere in Florida and the world have clearly demonstrated that protected marine reserve zones translate into an increase in fish, even beyond the reserve's boundaries. Just five years after creating a no-fishing marine reserve in Florida's Dry Tortugas

National Park, researchers documented a significant increase in both the size and quantity of fish in the region.

A marine reserve can help ensure the thriving underwater ecosystem that is iconic to Biscayne National Park continues to be a world-class destination for diving, snorkeling, sustainable recreational fishing and responsible boating.

NPCA's Regional Director based in Florida, Dr. Melissa Abdo, sums up the case for protecting Biscayne in a compelling fashion: "Biscayne is the underwater equivalent of Yosemite, and as a national park its current state is simply unacceptable. The National Park Service is bound by law to protect our most valuable natural and cultural resources that belong to all of us. We must hold them accountable so that current and future generations can experience the underwater treasures protected by America's largest marine national park."

Visiting npca.org to review our complete court filing and to follow developments in this and other cases led by NPCA.

Gratitude & Resolve

We all have the great privilege of visiting national parks today because of those who came before us to protect them. And now we have the opportunity to protect parks for the benefit of tomorrow's visitors.

Only 30 bills passed the last congress. One of them was the Great American Outdoors Act — a truly historic victory that will help fund and conserve our national parks and public lands. Together we fought hard for this bipartisan legislation and showed that national parks can bring people together across the country as well as across the aisle.

While this is an incredible win for our parks, the work doesn't end here. There's still so much for us to accomplish.

Working together, we can help reduce pollution that harms the air and water in national parks. We can support our national economy and enhance our public lands by increasing funding for park repairs, programming and staff. We can work to ensure our public lands are more welcoming to all. And we can help ensure that those who visit national parks, as well as those who work at them, have clear

guidelines and adequate safety equipment to protect them as we continue to fight against a global pandemic.

These will be among NPCA's top priorities as we continue to fulfill our mission to protect and preserve our national parks for future generations. I know we can count on you to join us in this worthy effort and I am grateful for your leadership and support of NPCA.



Sincerely,

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

Theresa Pierno
NPCA President & CEO

DOUBLE YOUR GIFT

For over a century NPCA has worked to protect national parks from a host of threats. But we cannot do it alone. In recognition of this, a leading NPCA supporter will be matching contributions up to \$100,000. **This means the impact of your gift to NPCA will be doubled.**

This generous contribution, combined with donations from Trustees for the Parks like you, will support NPCA's vital park protection work. We thank you for helping to protect and preserve these most treasured places.

Give online at my.npca.org/newsletter or use the enclosed envelope.





The New River Gorge Bridge, seen from Fayette Station Road, at New River Gorge National Park and Preserve (WV)

© Jon Bilous

THE WORLD'S BEST NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM IS NOW EVEN BETTER



Saguaro National Park (AZ)

© Eric Mischke/iStockphoto.com

NPCA's mission calls us to protect and enhance America's national parks. Two recent enhancements to the National Park System show how well you are helping to fulfill that mission.

- The federal funding bill that passed Congress late last year includes a provision expanding the boundary of Saguaro National Park in Arizona to include parcels of land totaling 1,152 acres. Some parcels will protect trailhead access and views; others will safeguard rivers and wildlife habitat; and one will prevent a beautiful hiking trail from becoming a two-mile-long private driveway.
- The same bill re-designated New River Gorge National River in West Virginia as New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. Contrary to its name, the New River is actually one of the world's oldest rivers and it includes spectacular scenery along with winding trails and river-rafting opportunities. The national park designation is expected to bring increased tourism benefits to the region.

Congratulations on being an owner of these new and improved national parks!

VICTORY FOR VETERANS

NPCA's veterans program helped achieve a hard-won victory last December with passage of the Accelerating Veterans Recovery Outdoors Act. The new law requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish an interagency task force to provide recommendations for increasing the use of public lands and other outdoor spaces for veterans' health and wellness.

NPCA and its veteran partners devoted nearly two years to building bipartisan support for this legislation that acknowledges the therapeutic and recreational values national parks and public lands can provide to military members who served our nation in uniform. One meaningful way to support these servicemembers is providing them and their families with the resources they need to heal and benefit from America's outdoor spaces.

NPCA Government Affairs Director of Operations and Park Funding, Emily Douce, hailed this legislative success as "great news for veterans and veteran organizations across the country. Every veteran in America deserves the chance to experience the healing powers of national parks."

Studies show that extended group-based nature recreation experiences can have positive impacts on veterans struggling with serious health problems, as well as help veterans reintegrate with civilian life.

Our veterans program works to engage the military community — including veterans, active duty, reservists and



Veterans service project to refresh the beach changing rooms at Dry Tortugas National Park (FL)

military families — in supporting national parks through service projects and a variety of advocacy actions.

Our national park system commemorates and interprets military history at 156 sites, including national battlefields and military parks. We are humbled by the courage and sacrifices of both today's defenders of freedom and all previous generations of American veterans.

You can learn more about NPCA's veterans program at www.npca.org/veterans.



A veterans service project between NPCA and The Mission Continues resulted in creating more access for park visitors. Mount Rainier National Park (WA)



The National Memorial for Peace and Justice (AL)

© Equal Justice Initiative

Custom NPCA Trip: *On the Road to Freedom*

This past summer marked a major turning point in the discussion on race and social justice in America. The death of George Floyd and countless others at the hands of police with the backdrop of numerous other experienced injustices resulted in widespread nationwide protests, the likes of which hadn't been seen since the 1960s.

NPCA is actively working on two campaigns in the Alabama Black Belt and Mississippi Delta regions focused on expanding cultural resource protections to help preserve the story of civil rights. Join NPCA as we travel to some of the most significant sites associated with this time period on our trip: **On the Road to Freedom: Understanding Civil Rights Through Our National Parks and Heritage Areas.**

During this remarkable trip, you will meet with NPCA partners, local historians, and even some of the faithful activists known as foot soldiers who actively played a role in the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

Your NPCA Host: Alan Spears is NPCA's Senior Director of Cultural Resources. Alan has led, co-led, or supported five successful national monument campaigns and is leading the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area campaign work for NPCA.

Trip Highlights Include:

- Learn firsthand about NPCA's successful campaign to help establish the Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument in 2017.
- Travel along the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail to walk across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, the site of the march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965 to protest lack of voting rights.

- Meet with several civil rights activists such as Hezekiah Watkins, who was Mississippi's youngest Freedom Rider.
- Participate in a private NPCA program at the Emmett Till Interpretive Center and Sumner Court House.

Itinerary Snapshot:

Our program begins in Birmingham, Alabama, the site of widespread bombings and race-based violence in the 1960s and a major protest movement. Then we head to Montgomery, headquarters of Bryan Stevenson's Equal Justice Initiative, which has been conducting extensive research into the history of racial injustice.

En route to Jackson, Mississippi, we will stop at National Park Service Sites: the Lowndes Interpretive Center, which focuses on the march from Selma to Montgomery, and the Selma Interpretive Center, which marks the beginning of the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail.

In Jackson, we will visit the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument as well as the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum and Vicksburg National Military Park.

Our program includes a day in the Mississippi Delta exploring Mound Bayou, a town founded in 1887 by former slaves, with a vision that was revolutionary for its time, and the town of Sumner where the trial of Emmett Till took place.

We end in Memphis where we explore the National Civil Rights Museum, which guides visitors through five centuries of Civil Rights history as well as the world-renowned Stax Museum of American Soul Music.

To learn more and reserve your spot today, contact Jared Dial at 202-454-3305 or jdial@npca.org.

NPCA Blog Excerpt:

THIS LAND IS THEIR LAND

December 15, 2020 was the 50th anniversary of the Blue Lake Act, historic legislation that marked a critical shift for Indigenous communities and their lands.

When President Nixon signed the bill into law, 48,000 acres of sacred, traditional land was returned to the Taos Pueblo Tribe of northern New Mexico after a 64-year struggle. Allowing people of the Taos Pueblo Tribe to once again govern their own land was one of the most important events in the history of the U.S. government's relationship with American Indian people.

President Theodore Roosevelt declared Blue Lake to be part of the U.S. National Forest System in 1906. And although it was never part of a national park, all national parks are created from land that once belonged to Native Americans.

Of course, our national parks are a revolutionary concept that gives ownership of America's most inspirational places to all people. But this visionary system only exists because the federal government stole these lands from their rightful

owners and forcibly removed people who were dedicated stewards of these places for centuries.

All people who love public lands and care about social justice must reckon with these coexisting truths. Returning lands to Indigenous communities and supporting co-management of national park sites in ways that allow tribal access and traditional uses are important steps in this reckoning.

Although we cannot change history, we can remember places like Blue Lake, celebrate the hard-earned victories of the Taos Pueblo, and make it part of our advocacy to honor and help restore the connections between tribes and parks and tell the whole story of how our treasured public commons came to be.

Read NPCA's full blog post at www.npca.org/bluelake

You can also read about 15 national park sites that honor indigenous history at www.npca.org/theirland





Cherry Blossoms at the Tidal Basin, Washington DC

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Golden Gate National Recreation Area (CA)

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JOIN US FOR PARK TALKS

NPCA is proud to bring you a collection of virtual Park Talks. These live presentations provide an opportunity to hear from NPCA staff, park experts and partners about some of the park stories, threats and victories we are most eager to share.

Our Park Talks have included:

- **How a Shirt, Hotel Stay and Beer can Protect Parks**
- **Amache: A living history, an American story, and a new opportunity for the National Park Service**
- **Seeing Clearly: Advocating for Clean Air in Parks**
- **Understanding Civil Rights Through our National Parks and Heritage Areas**
- **Suffrage and Seneca Falls**

You can find upcoming Park Talks and recordings of previous talks on our website at www.npca.org/parktalking