

RANGER

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Stewards for parks, visitors & each other

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Commemorating the right to vote





Cedar Tree Tower, Mesa Verde National Park, 
Photo: NPS.gov

Colorado

RESOURCES

Public policies continue to affect park resources

BALANCING THE CONSUMING REALITY OF COVID-19 WITH THE EVER-PRESENT NEED TO DEFEND BEDROCK ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS

We are living in unprecedented times, with COVID-19 threatening the health and well-being of our families, communities and economy.

As our country struggled to adjust to social distancing and stay-at-home orders, the administration continued moving full speed ahead with oil and gas lease sales, planning processes and rulemaking that affect parks. The National Park Conservation Association (NPCA) has requested extensions on comment periods and decision-making to allow for the public, appropriately preoccupied with the coronavirus, to meaningfully participate in these processes. However, at the time of this writing, there does not appear to be any plan to slow down.

Unfortunately, this isn't new. We've seen national parks and public lands threatened repeatedly in recent times. While resource extraction and energy development are important for our world and provide needed jobs and revenue to rural economies, NPCA believes they can and should be balanced with the conservation of our public lands and public health. Instead, we are witnessing the systematic dismantling of the bedrock environmental laws intended to protect our lands and communities.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) has been a foundation for environmental protection since Richard Nixon

signed it into law in 1970. NEPA requires the government to analyze the potential impacts of resource extraction or development activities on federal public lands. For 50 years the NEPA process has saved many parks from incompatible development within and near their borders.

The current administration's proposed changes to NEPA would 1) restrict or completely ignore public comments, 2) allow private industry to conduct their own environmental assessments (removing objectivity and impartiality), 3) ignore an activity's cumulative and indirect impacts (especially critical in the context of climate change and for communities living downstream or downwind), and 4) limit the scope of projects that require environmental review.

NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT

The 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, which has helped preserve many of the world-class archaeological and cultural sites our southwestern parks are known for, is also under attack. The administration favors limiting the ability of tribes – who know these places so well – and state historic preservation offices to submit nominations for historic sites. Additionally, revisions to the act would give local landowners more discretion over nominations based on how much land they own, as opposed to the one-person, one-vote principle of our democracy.

These proposed changes to NEPA and the National Historic Preservation Act are

only the latest examples of why parks and public lands need the continued support of advocates now more than ever. To learn more about this please visit [NPCA.org](https://www.npca.org).

Together, we are stronger. Together, we can make a difference.

One only need look at the way we have rallied and supported one another during this time of COVID-19 to know the truth of that.

— Ernie Atencio
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membership**

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