

## Background Guide



National Park Service

Topic A: Protecting Wildlife From Human Activity

Topic B: Combating Wildfires in National Parks

Chair: Landon Bailey

TAEMUN IX

December 8-9, 2023

TAEMUN IX  
*National Park Service*

Hello delegates!

My name is Landon Bailey and I will be your chair for the National Parks Service committee. I have been actively involved with TAEMUN and MUN since my freshman year and am currently a senior. I love participating in a wide variety of committees, but my favorites are certainly historical, specs. and of course, crisis! When I'm not doing MUN, I enjoy playing the piano, cooking, and traveling (I do like visiting National parks). MUN has been an incredibly fun and rewarding experience for me throughout my high school career. I got to be a part of an awesome supportive community, attend incredible events, and learn so many new skills! I hope all of you will continue your MUN journey into high school, and I can't wait to welcome all of you into this year's TAEMUN! I will be more than happy to give feedback or answer any questions you may have!

Sincerely,

Landon Bailey

Hello to all TAEMUN attendees!

My name is Julia Jones and I will be one of the assistant directors for this committee! I'm in my junior year at Edison and this is my second year in Model UN. Outside of MUN, I enjoy a lot of hobbies such as baking, crochet, reading, and playing the piano and guitar. Joining MUN was such a great choice for me since it improved my research skills, increased my confidence to speak in front of crowds, and it grew my social circle! Goodluck to everyone and make sure to have fun!

Sincerely,

Julia Jones

TAEMUN IX  
*National Park Service*

Hello TAEMUN delegates!

My name is Laveeza Atteeq and I will be another one of your assistant directors for this committee! I'm a junior here at Edison and this is currently my 3rd year participating in MUN. I have a few hobbies outside of school like reading and gardening. MUN has been such an amazing experience for me so far, its grown my public speaking skills. Good Luck!

Sincerely,

Laveeza Atteeq



## **Topic A: Protecting Wildlife From Human Activity**

### **Background:**

The National Parks Service serves an essential role in preserving natural resources and wildlife habitats. Its mission is to protect clean air, clean water, and provide an open space for current wildlife and future generations. National Parks are the largest source of open land in the United States. Clean, green, and accessible parks and open spaces improve the quality of life of not just wildlife, but every person in every community.

The protection of wildlife from the impact of human activity has become an increasingly critical issue in the management and preservation of national parks and natural habitats around the world. National parks are unique areas designated to conserve the ecological integrity of diverse landscapes and to provide refuge for a wide range of plant and animal species. However, the very presence of human visitors and activities within these protected areas can pose significant challenges to the well-being of the wildlife that call these places home.

Solving these challenges requires a well-rounded approach that balances the goals of conservation and recreation. National park authorities, governments, non-governmental organizations, and local communities must work together to develop and implement policies and practices that minimize the negative impact of human activities on wildlife and their habitats.

### **Current Situation:**

Today, national parks across the country are facing numerous man made challenges directly impacting the well-being of wildlife inhabiting these ecosystems.

With the rising popularity of national parks, these natural sanctuaries have faced growing pressures. High visitation rates have led to issues like overcrowding, off-trail hiking, and improper camping practices, causing habitat destruction and increased stress on wildlife. Human-wildlife conflicts have also surged due to visitor behavior such as feeding animals and unsafe approaches, resulting in safety concerns for both visitors and wildlife.

Habitat fragmentation, (when parts of a habitat are destroyed, leaving smaller, disconnected areas) continues to be a significant concern. The expansion of park infrastructure, including roads and facilities, has the effect of isolating wildlife populations, diminishing genetic diversity, and posing a threat to the survival of various species.

Pollution in the form of plastic waste, noise pollution, light pollution and chemical contaminants remains a persistent risk to wildlife and their ecosystems. Furthermore, the influence of climate change on these ecosystems is evident, with temperature fluctuations and alterations in habitats affecting the behavior and distribution of species.

### **Past Park Service Actions:**

The NPS enforces numerous regulations to ensure that wildlife is protected and visitors are compliant. You may have noticed these if you have previously visited a national park. These regulations include but are not limited to: strict prohibitions against feeding wildlife, speeding limits in wildlife-sensitive areas, leash laws for pets, and camping regulations.

The NPS has also worked to develop sustainable infrastructure plans that consider the impact on wildlife and ecosystems. Efforts have been made to design and construct roads, facilities, and visitor centers in ways that minimize habitat fragmentation and disturbance to wildlife. Examples include wildlife corridors, solar panels, and green roofs.

Additionally, government initiatives like the Endangered Species Act (1973) and Great American Outdoors Act (2020) have demonstrated the U.S. government's commitment to protecting and preserving the nation's natural heritage.

Lastly, the NPS has developed many educational programs and materials across national parks, all aimed at informing visitors about the importance of responsible park behavior. These can come in various forms, such as visitor centers, interpretive signs, and ranger-led talks. Some of the behaviors typically emphasized include not feeding wildlife, staying on designated trails, and proper waste disposal.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Which actions are most harmful towards species in the state you represent?
2. What are alternatives to those actions?
3. What regulations can be put in place to protect wildlife from negative human activity?

**Useful Links:**

- <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/rareandendangered/what-you-can-do-in-parks.htm#:~:text=Follow%20Park%20Rules%20%26%20Obey%20Closures,the%20protection%20of%20nesting%20animals.>
- <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/resource-library-human-impacts-environment/>
- [https://scholarship.law.uwyo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1709&context=land\\_water](https://scholarship.law.uwyo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1709&context=land_water)

**Bibliography:**

“What We Do (U.S. National Park Service).” About Us, National Parks Service, 20 Oct. 2023, [www.nps.gov/aboutus/index.htm#:~:text=Follow%20Us-,Our%20Mission,of%20this%20and%20future%20generations.](http://www.nps.gov/aboutus/index.htm#:~:text=Follow%20Us-,Our%20Mission,of%20this%20and%20future%20generations.)

Butcher, Devereux. “Brief History of the National Parks.” Mapping the National Parks, Library of Congress, [www.loc.gov/collections/national-parks-maps/articles-and-essays/brief-history-of-the-national-parks/#:~:text=The%20national%20parks%20of%20today,%2C%20natural%20communities%2C%20and%20species.](http://www.loc.gov/collections/national-parks-maps/articles-and-essays/brief-history-of-the-national-parks/#:~:text=The%20national%20parks%20of%20today,%2C%20natural%20communities%2C%20and%20species.)

“Top 10 Issues Facing National Parks.” National Geographic: Travel, National Geographic, 26 May 2010, [www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/national-parks-issues.](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/national-parks-issues.)

“WHAT IS HABITAT FRAGMENTATION AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR OUR WILDLIFE?” Edited by James Martin, Woodland Trust, 16 Aug. 2018, [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2018/08/what-is-habitat-fragmentation-and-what-does-it-mean-for-our-wildlife/#:~:text=Fragmentation%20happens%20when%20parts%20of,a%20road%20through%20a%20woodland.](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2018/08/what-is-habitat-fragmentation-and-what-does-it-mean-for-our-wildlife/#:~:text=Fragmentation%20happens%20when%20parts%20of,a%20road%20through%20a%20woodland.)

“What Is Green Infrastructure?” *United States Environmental Protection Agency*, 2 Oct. 2023, [www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/what-green-infrastructure.](http://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/what-green-infrastructure.)

“Great American Outdoors Act.” U.S. Department of the Interior, [www.doi.gov/gaoa.](http://www.doi.gov/gaoa.)

## **Topic B: Combating Wildfires in National Parks**

### **Background:**

A wildfire is an uncontrolled and rapidly spreading fire that occurs in forests, grasslands, or other natural areas. It can be ignited by various sources, including lightning, human activities, or volcanic eruptions. Wildfires can quickly consume large areas, fueled by dry vegetation, strong winds, and hot conditions, often causing significant environmental damage and posing threats to human and animal communities.

With their burn path increasing each year, wildfires are a disaster with growing importance. Their unpredictable nature allows them to ignite in a wide range of environments such as forests, grasslands, and savannas. Despite the fact that wildfires tend to frequent states within the East Coast and central US, wildfires in Western states cover more area. They mostly occur in undeveloped areas and are stubborn to extinguish, some burning for months on end.

Although wildfires pose a dangerous threat to park communities and infrastructure, certain fires can be beneficial towards the maintenance of a healthy ecosystem. Fires can help plants spread seeds and create extra space in forests to provide plants with more light and water. The National Park Service has the responsibility of taking this into account when containing and controlling wildfires.

### **Current Situation:**

Five states with the top number of acres burned by wildfires between 2011 and 2020 are Alaska, California, Oregon, Idaho, and Texas. However, statistics on the amount of land burned in a state does not perfectly imply how many fires there have been in that territory. At the beginning of November 2023, Alaska had 2 wildfires burning across 49,681 acres while



Tennessee had 2 wildfires burning across 94 acres. During the past decade, the United State's annual number of wildfires has decreased, but the amount of acres burned in their path has increased.

It is important to keep in mind the causes that contribute to each state's number of wildfires. Some states report a higher number of wildfires due to irresponsible human activity, such as leaving campfires unattended and improperly disposing of cigarettes. Other states may list natural occurrences such as lightning strikes and extreme weather events to be among their top causes of wildfires. Human activity has resulted in 85% of yearly wildfires seen throughout the United States. So far in 2023 (as of Nov. 3rd), 43,796 human-caused wildfires have burned 1.4 million acres. In comparison, lightning strikes have led to 5,559 wildfires burning 1.2 million acres.

**Past Park Service Actions:**

The National Park Service recognizes wildfires as one of the most detrimental issues across parks within the United States. There are multiple different factors that go into the decisions that NPS fire managers have made to determine the appropriate response to handling wildfires. These include the possible risks of a fire to both human life and the environment as well as the location and spread of the fire. Certain wildfires have been allowed to continue burning after taking these factors into consideration. The NPS works to contain wildfires so that they are unable to spread and then control them by fully extinguishing them. Fire managers are educated in the scientific strategies that can be used to suppress fires and use that knowledge to create and carry out a plan. The wildfire staff is thoroughly trained to protect park visitors in the case of emergencies. In addition, the NPS has made efforts to share vital emergency safety

tactics with the public. While dealing with wildfires, ways of preserving the cultural and natural landscapes of parks are kept in mind.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What are common causes of manmade and naturally occurring wildfires?
1. How can wildfires be put out or controlled once they begin to spread?
2. How can wildfires be prevented?

**Useful Links:**

- <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/wildfires/>
- <https://www.fireweatheravalanche.org/fire/current-list-of-us-wildfires>
- <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1965/upload/wildland-fire-fact-sheet.pdf>

**Bibliography:**

U.S. Department of the Interior. (n.d.). *Wf: Response to wildfire stories*. National Parks Service.

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/fire/response-to-wildfire.htm#:~:text=Using%20%242.6%0million%20from%20the,planning%20stages%20for%20restoration%20within>

Toothman, J., & Sim&acute;n, Y. (2023, August 15). *5 common causes of wildfires*.

HowStuffWorks Science.

<https://science.howstuffworks.com/nature/natural-disasters/5-ways-wildfires-start.htm#:~:text=Lightning%2C%20volcanoes%2C%20extreme%20weather%20events,the%20top%20causes%20of%20wildfires>

*National fire news*. National Fire News | National Interagency Fire Center. (n.d.).

<https://www.nifc.gov/fire-information/nfn#:~:text=November%203%202023&text=To%20date%2C%2043%2C796%20human%2Dcaused,Carolina%2C%20Mississippi%2C%20and%20Florida>

*Facts + statistics: Wildfires*. III. (n.d.).

<https://www.iii.org/fact-statistic/facts-statistics-wildfires#:~:text=DOWNLOAD%20TO%20PDF-,Key%20Facts,yearly%20in%20the%20United%20States>

USAFacts. (2023, October 5). *How many wildfires occur in the US?*

<https://usafacts.org/articles/how-many-wildfires-occur-in-the-us/>

*Wildfires*. Education. (n.d.). <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/wildfires/>