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# **In shutdown, national parks transformed into Wild West** by Joel Achenbach

1 JOSHUA TREE, California - The government shutdown has left America's national parks largely unsupervised. No one is at the gate. No one is collecting a fee. The visitor centers are closed. There are some law enforcement and emergency personnel on site, but certainly nothing as standard as a park ranger who can answer a question.

2 People are streaming into the parks, enjoying the free access, but they're finding trash cans overflowing and restrooms locked. Vault toilets are not serviced, and there's hardly a flush toilet to be found anywhere. If nature calls — well, the woods are over that way.

3 At Joshua Tree National Park, in particular, conditions are deteriorating. "Once those port-a-potties fill up there's no amount of cleaning that will save them," said Sabra Purdy, who along with her husband, Seth, owns the rock-climbing guide service Cliffhanger Guides in the town of Joshua Tree.

4 The 40-year-old Purdy is among dozens of volunteers who have been collecting garbage, cleaning bathrooms and generally keeping an eye on the park. Local business owners and park supporters are donating toiletries and cleaning supplies. "People are doing it because we love this place and we know how trashed it'll get if we don't," she said. "It's not quite 'Lord of the Flies' yet," said Bryan Min, age 30, who traveled to Joshua Tree with friends from Orange County and is camping outside the park. "Who knows how it'll be tonight?"

5 The partial government shutdown, triggered by the dispute between President Donald Trump and Congress over funding for a U.S.-Mexico border wall, is now well into its second week, with no resolution in sight. Democrats, who took control of the House on Thursday, plan to vote on a bill to open much of the government while denying Trump money for the wall. The president, in a tweet on Tuesday, rejected the legislation that provides border security money but no funds for the wall. Trump also invited congressional leaders to the White House on Wednesday for a briefing on border security, the first sit-down since the shutdown began December 22 though it was unclear if the session would break the budget impasse.

6 One of the most dramatic repercussions of the shutdown arrived Wednesday, when the Smithsonian Institution, having depleted temporary funding, had to close all of its museums and the National Zoo. Some parks across the country have remained partially operational with state funding. Government shutdown contingency plans adopted by the National Park Service last year have allowed many national parks to remain accessible, but without staffing. The result is that "closed" parks are essentially wide open, and in some cases that gives them a Wild West vibe.

7 The Park Service runs a broad constellation of parks, monuments, battlefields and historic sites. At Antietam National Battlefield in Maryland, the visitor center has a small notice on the front door advising visitors "to use extreme caution if choosing to enter" park property. On the hallowed ground, where the Army of the Potomac collided with the Army of Northern Virginia in the bloodiest day in American military history, the flagpole in front of the visitor center remains conspicuously bare.

8 The access road to Maryland's Great Falls of the Potomac, part of the C & O Canal National Historical Park, has been blocked. At midday Tuesday, hundreds of cars were lined up on nearby neighborhood roads and streets as people walked into the park, many taking advantage of the canal towpath, which remains unblocked.

9 The situation is fluid: Rumors spread Monday that Joshua Tree would close the campgrounds, though the Park Service's contingency plan indicates that campers will be allowed to stay and won't be evicted.

10 Some advocates for the parks aren't happy about this situation, fearing that visitors will do permanent damage to the parks and potentially disrupt fragile ecosystems. They'd like to see the parks fully closed. "The parks are supposed to be heritage sites for generation after generation. I would rather they close than be damaged," said Joe De Luca, a sales associate at Nomad Ventures in the town of Joshua Tree.

11 During a government shutdown in 2013, Joshua Tree was closed to all visitors. The winter holiday season is a busy time here and important for local businesses, and some people are grateful that the park hasn't blocked access this time, said Kenji Haroutunian, president of Friends of Joshua Tree, a nonprofit local climbing organization. But he's not happy with the shutdown and the attendant loss of normal services in the huge park that he said is within a two-hour drive of 14 million people in southern California. "It's hugely disappointing," Haroutunian said. The border wall dispute, he said, "is not a priority that deserves to close down the government."

12 At Big Bend National Park in Texas, George Cashman of Milwaukee said he was disappointed by the absence of park rangers. Last year, he said, he took his family — including four kids under the age of 10 — to Yellowstone, where the kids enjoyed the junior ranger program.

13 "There are no rangers to talk to and help the kids out. Last year, one of the rangers in Yellowstone let them take the temperature of one of the geysers. Those memories aren't going to happen this year," Cashman said. Greg Henington, owner of Far Flung Outdoor Center in Terlingua, a town just outside the park, said he voted for Trump but blames the president for the shutdown, which he says creates confusion and uncertainty for local businesses. "If we are going to continue to use the federal government as a weapon for not getting what we want in the sandbox, then this is untenable for small business. We can't make decisions, we lay off employees, we take cancellations," he said.

14 Even more seriously affected is the Mexican town of Boquillas, which is just across the Rio Grande from the national park and has always enjoyed a stream of visitors this time of year. But the border crossing normally staffed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has been closed during the shutdown, and no one is coming or going across the river.

15 "It has been terrible. We were waiting for our best time of the year," said Lilia Falcon, who owns a restaurant and a bed & breakfast in Boquillas. "It's when we wait and stock up and save the money we make for the rest of the year. Christmas has not been good for us because of the shutdown, but what can we do? Nothing! Nobody will ever hear us."

16 In Death Valley National Park, employees of The Oasis at Death Valley, a private resort inside the park, have joined other concessionaires in picking up trash and cleaning bathrooms, said Trey Matheu, general manager of the resort. "We're in it for the long haul," he vowed.

17 At Yellowstone National Park, access this time of year depends on grooming of snow-covered roads — but the National Park Service's shutdown plan does not consider such activity to be essential. That means the private concessionaires have had to pool their money to pay for the grooming. "If we don't do this, we're closed. That's really not much of an option. Having said that, we're doing this certainly in hope and anticipation that the shutdown does not go on indefinitely," said Rick Hoeninghausen, director of sales and marketing for Xanterra Travel Collection, a concessionaire in Yellowstone and many other parks.

18 Back at Joshua Tree, Sabrina Krafton, 50, who traveled to the park from London for some New Year's climbing, said she appreciates the hard work by volunteers who are collecting litter and donating toilet paper. "I think they actually provide better rolls than the government," Krafton said. "It's better-quality paper."

1. Which idea is BEST supported by paragraph 5?

A. The partial government shutdown has had no effect on the debates in Congress.

B. The partial government shutdown will become a full shutdown very soon.

C. National parks will reopen only after legislation promises funding for a border wall.

D. National parks are likely to remain fully or partially closed for the foreseeable future.

2. Is the author suggesting that visitors to national parks will be without help or rescue if they are injured? Which selection from the article BEST supports your answer?

A. Yes; the government shutdown has left America's national parks largely unsupervised. No one is at the gate. No one is collecting a fee.

B. No; there are some law enforcement and emergency personnel on site, but certainly nothing as standard as a park ranger who can answer a question.

C. Yes; at Antietam National Battlefield in Maryland, the visitor center has a small notice on the front door advising visitors "to use extreme caution if choosing to enter" park property.

D. No; at midday Tuesday, hundreds of cars were lined up on nearby neighborhood roads and streets as people walked into the park, many taking advantage of the canal towpath, which remains unblocked.

3. How does the article develop the idea that some are concerned about the impact a lack of supervision will have on America's national parks?

A. by describing the effects that previous government shutdowns have had on national parks and their number of visitors

B. by explaining that volunteers are helping to clean the parks and quoting local residents and environmental advocates

C. by reiterating the risks for the wildlife and environment posed by parks' overflowing garbage cans and port-a-potties

D. by introducing the fact that the Smithsonian Institution has closed and comparing it with the closure of the National Zoo

4. Why does the author conclude the article with quotes from owners of businesses located inside or close to national parks?

A. to elaborate on the consequences and uncertainty the closure of the parks has caused

B. to emphasize the determination and resilience of those who love and support the parks

C. to illustrate the connection between the government shutdown and border security

D. to indicate the broad disagreement about whether the parks should fully close

5. Which answer choice BEST describes George Cashman's reaction to visiting Big Bend National Park?

A. Cashman expressed anger that a lack of rangers in the park meant his kids had to use dirty and dangerous facilities while camping.

B. Cashman expressed regret that a lack of rangers in the park meant his kids' experience was not as good as the one they had at Yellowstone.

C. Cashman expressed surprise that the park was in good condition even though he enjoyed it less than his previous visit to Yellowstone.

D. Cashman expressed interest in volunteering to help local businesses keep the park clean until workers can return after the shutdown.

6. How are the opinions of Greg Henington and Lilia Falcon connected to each other?

A. Henington's opinion about the best time of year for local businesses to earn money is in opposition to Falcon's opinion.

B. Henington's opinion about confusion and uncertainty is contrasted and contradicted by Falcon's opinion.

C. Henington's opinion about the blame for the government shutdown is further clarified by Falcon's opinion.

D. Henington's opinion about the impact on local businesses is developed and supported by Falcon's opinion.

7. How does Achenbach use rhetoric to develop his claim in the article? (Hint: **What** was his claim? **How** did he show it?) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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8.“**About 800,000 federal workers are going without pay — and a growing number of them, worrying about missing mortgage and credit card payments, are filing for unemployment benefits. So have laboratories run by NASA and the Smithsonian Institution’s museums along the National Mall. Food inspections have become fewer, as have many checks by the Environmental Protection Agency. Travelers have complained that airport security lines, run by Transportation Security Administration officers who are working without pay, have come to a crawl.** ” Explain how this paragraph relates to Achenbach’s central idea.

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9. What do you think should be done at the National Parks during the government shutdown? Why? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_