

Worried about the state of the National Park System? Concerned about whether Elon Musk's chainsaw is destroying irreplaceable groves of Sequoias? [Have no fear!](#)

Under criticism for staff cuts across the country, Interior Secretary Doug Burgum is directing national parks to "remain open and accessible" and says officials will ensure proper staffing to do so.

The order, issued late Thursday, also calls for a detailed review of each park's operating hours, trail closures and other limits on visitor services.

Burgum said in the order that his department and the National Park Service "are committed to ensuring that all Americans have the opportunity to visit and enjoy our Nation's most treasured places."

But park advocates and others criticized the move and questioned how park employees could comply, given the Trump administration's [workforce reductions](#) through voluntary separation offers, layoffs and an earlier hiring freeze. Fewer workers can mean shorter hours, delays, closed campgrounds, overflowing trash bins, unkept bathrooms, and risks to public safety, they say.

The park service has lost somewhere near 1,500 permanent employees since the beginning of this year, Rick Mossman, president of the Arizona-based Association of National Park Rangers, said Friday in a statement. And it's "bracing for another reduction in force expected in the very near future."

To use the technical term, Burgum's order is fatuous (and that is being polite). [NPS staffing levels dropped by 15% from 2011 to 2022](#) - before the DOGE chainsaw got going. What gives?

One could interpret this through the Woody Allen lens. In the 1971 film, *Bananas*, [a newly installed revolutionary President declares](#) that "all children under 16 years old...are now 16 years old." (As well as some other far-reaching policy initiatives). This is a Regime, and a political party, that simply declares inconvenient facts not to be true. It has a deep pedigree in the Conservative Movement: Josh Marshall penned [a now-famous piece](#) entitled *The Post-Modern President* in 2003.



But one might also interpret this as the most cynical of political gestures. We are coming up on the summer vacationing and touring season. Americans will not be happy to find that the family trip to Yellowstone or Sequoia that they have been saving up for now is cancelled because the parks are shut down or hours are strictly curtailed or trails closed. So Burgum is looking for someone to blame.

"I gave a direct order to keep those trails open!!! How dare these lazy, entitled bureaucrats deprive hard-working Americans of the trip of a lifetime!!" And that will be used to justify more cuts to the NPS.

Will Americans buy it? Some might. As we have seen over the last week or so, MAGA acolytes can turn on a dime to cover for the Dear Leader. Four days ago, they told us that tariffs were a brilliant strategy to bring manufacturing back to the United States. Then on Wednesday, they told us, in billionaire douchebag Bill Ackman's words, that removing the tariffs was brilliant dealmaking. We have *always* been at war with Eastasia.

But I wonder whether it will work that well. I rarely am optimistic about voters, but I suspect that they will be more inclined to believe the park ranger who explains that staff cuts means that you can't go see Delicate Arch than a press release from the administration. And that will be particularly true when the merchants and hotel operators who depend upon tourism for their livelihood realize that Canadian, Japanese, and European visitors have decided to stay far away from America and its strange, decadent Golden Age.