



# White Sands National Monument

## Primary Interpretive Themes

A. Shifting geologic and climatic processes created ideal conditions for the source of the Earth's largest and geologically recent gypsum dunefield — prompting ongoing wonder at its unspoiled uniqueness found nowhere else on Earth.

B. Water is essential to the creation, formation, and preservation of the dune system—without which, the dunefield would be irreparably damaged and scientific and recreational pursuits would be permanently degraded.

C. The monument's biological richness and diversity, with more than 50 endemic species, offers insights into the amazing resilience of life and its ability to thrive in what would commonly be thought of as an inhospitable desert environment.

D. Scientific research and discoveries regarding the monument's biological and geological richness—so evident and important that it garners international scientific interest—and the ongoing sharing of this work with the public, offer insights into the degree to which scientific pursuits inform our lives.

d1. The scientific data that record the remarkable, rapid evolution occurring at the Monument offers endless possibilities to ponder the necessity of change in the continual reshaping of all forms of life.

d2. The Monument's intriguing, elusive Pleistocene trackways—which abruptly appear as the wind reveals their form in the gypsum, then quickly disappear via erosive forces now empowered to remove them—teach us about taking advantage of unexpected opportunities in the short time they exist.

E. The richness and diversity of human interaction with this region—from habitation by the paleoindians to aeronautical experimentation—provides opportunities for comparing and contrasting the values and adaptations of former cultures to those of our own.

e1. The Monument's gypsum dunefield, with its many rare and distinctive characteristics, serves as an analog for the surface of Mars that enables us to test specialized technologies, furthering our irrepressible desire to explore as we push our quest for knowledge as far into space as our reach will allow.

F. For generations the driving forces of wind and water behind these timeless dunes have both delighted and bewitched, teased and tormented visitors, rewarding the patient with a sense of appreciation, learning, and stewardship.

G. Although the monument is located beneath the nation's largest military airspace and is bordered by military installations, this incongruous relationship enables a deeper understanding of the underlying mission that both institutions share in common: to preserve cultural values for the benefit of future generations.

## National Park Service Interpretive Themes

H. Mission of the NPS

I. LNT/Safety