

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Joshua Tree National Monument
Twentynine Palms, California

June 30, 1943

GUSTODIAN'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL MONUMENT

Introduction

Since the last annual report was written for Joshua Tree, there has been a complete change in personnel, former Superintendent Cole being furloughed for military service November 1, and the Clerk-Ranger furloughed prior to that date. Consequently there has been much to learn in order that we have even a fair understanding of events up to the time of actual entrance on duty. Small problems which ordinarily could be answered in minutes by one familiar with them at once take on major importance to the uninitiated.

High credit is due the Regional Director and his staff for their understanding of and assistance in our problems. Without this ready source of helpful advice and assistance our road for the past seven months would have indeed been a rocky one.

Weather Conditions

Weather conditions during the past year are briefly given.

Maximum temperature for year	114 on July 25, 1942
Minimum temperature for year	18 on January 19, 1943
Average Maximum for year	84
Average minimum for year	51
Total rainfall at Twentynine Palms for year	- 3.95 inches.
Total rainfall at Split Rock in monument, elevation 4,000	- 8.55 inches.
There were 266 clear days, 73 partly cloudy, and 25 cloudy days.	
A short hail storm of some intensity was experienced April 15, 1943.	

BAR REQUESTS

A special use permit was issued to the U. S. Forest Service to install two aircraft warning stations in the monument for the Fourth Fighter Command, United States Army.

Permission was given the Army to close an unnamed and little used road leading into Lost Palms Canyon on the south boundary of the monu-

ment in order that the Shaver's Summit Air Support Command Base located there might be better policed.

The Army request to construct a military road through the eastern section of the monument developed into a major problem. Though permission was denied by the Department, pioneer work was done without permission by the Army. Through later negotiations with new commanding officers corrective landscape work was accomplished with troop labor on the ends of this "road".

Due to expanding mechanized forces in this desert area and constantly changing officers it has been a continuing task to keep this armored equipment from using the monument in their maneuvers. Much time has been devoted to this problem and at present a mutual understanding appears to have been reached. A revision of army maps in relation to maneuver areas and conspicuous signing by the Army of monument boundaries, designating the monument as off limits to maneuvering vehicles, should reduce future difficulties of this kind.

It should be borne in mind that adequately frequent inspections covering the vulnerable sections of the monument simply cannot be carried out, and other necessary work carried on. Vast distances which must be traveled, particularly with two-wheel drive vehicles, coupled with the rubber and gasoline shortage, limited personnel, and no communication all tend to drastically limit our accomplishments. It is simply a case of doing the best we can under the circumstances.

Grazing Requests

Due to pressure of grazing privileges a study was made of range and forage conditions by Ecologist Harold M. Estaliff during November. Results of this study showed possible year round grazing for only 153 head of cattle.

Considerable effort has been made by us and the Regional Director's office in an attempt to negotiate a grazing permit with William F. Keys, a resident rancher, but without success. This is due to lack of cooperation on his part, and an insistent demand to write his own terms.

Maintenance

Heavy rains during January did a good deal of damage to improved roads. A \$600 allotment for storm damage restored them to a nearly normal condition. However, loss of the clay mixture in several sections due to washing could not be restored. Mixing of clay in certain sandy stretches is the difference between good and poor desert roads. Consequently maintenance may be expected to be somewhat higher if the roads are to be kept in their past good condition.

For the past year the maintenance crew has consisted of one man only, who has 66 miles of road to keep up. Judging by the road maintenance fund for the coming year we will have one third of a man, provided we are fortunate enough to get someone who will work part time.

Maps, Plans, and Surveys

A base map for Joshua Tree was completed during the fall and winter by Engineer assignment from the Region Four office.

Rights of Way surveys were also made of the improved roads which cross private land.

Considerable study has been given to selection of the monument headquarters site by the Regional office staff and monument personnel, but as yet no definite decision has been reached. No agreement has been reached with the Twentynine Palms Corporation regarding the oasis site. Other possible sites depend on an available source of water supply, and as yet no funds have been available for exploring the water situation.

Plans for simplification of the monument road system were submitted to the Director for approval by the Regional Director the latter part of March.

Cooperating Governmental Agencies

A limited amount of field work was done in examining mining claims during the winter by General Land Office Field Examiners, but has been curtailed since March due to lack of funds for work of this nature.

Land Status

This office has received notices of 108 claims cancelled during the year, and notices of seven valid claims against which proceedings have been dismissed.

Our land status map has as yet not been brought up to date for this year due to press of other duties and extra mileage necessary in order to check County records. We expect to get this information as much as possible soon in connection with other necessary business.

General Publicity

Definite effort has been made to avoid publicity of any kind which would tend to attract travel to the monument, and as far as we know there has been none.

Travel

Travel for the fiscal year just ended is 57% less than the preceding year. All figures used in connection with travel are based on estimates only, but are doubtless on the conservative side. As a matter of fact, Joshua Tree has never had sufficient personnel to count visitors for even brief periods. We do know, however, that the present travel is composed largely of members of the armed forces and civilians directly engaged in war work at the Twentynine Palms Air Training Base.

Forest Fire Protection

The 150-acre fire in Lost Horse Valley last July Fourth was ample evidence that a very definite fire hazard does exist at Joshua Tree. A rough estimate of burnable area is 100,000 acres, some of the cover being much more dense than the Lost Horse Valley region.

The greatest problem confronting us in proper fire protection is lack of detection and communication. This is followed closely by urgent need of a four-wheel drive pumping unit for rapid cross country work.

Cooperating agreements have been renewed with State Division of Forestry officials of both San Bernardino and Riverside counties for use of pumping equipment, the nearest unit being 80 miles from the monument.

Police Protection

Very little can be written about what has been accomplished, but much could be written about the needs. The general enforcement picture is muddled with private land, concurrent jurisdiction, lack of a proper line of authority, different opinions, and a woeful lack of personnel.

Hunting violations are common. The most favorable element of wildlife protection at present is gas rationing and travel restrictions, plus almost no mining activity within the monument.

Evidence in the killing of a desert bighorn sheep was turned over to the California Fish and Game Commission for prosecution after no action had been obtained on a complaint before the U. S. Attorney's office. Convictions and fines of \$100.00 each were obtained against the two defendants by the Fish and Game Commission.

At present a resident of the monument, Mr. William F. Keys, is under trial for murder in Riverside County as a result of the killing of a neighbor resident, Mr. North Bagley. County authorities were in charge of the investigation.

Dame D. Jacobs
Acting Custodian