

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Joshua Tree National Monument
Twentynine Palms, California

July 7, 1944.

MEMORANDUM for the Director.

GUSTODIAN'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL MONUMENT

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Introduction

The task of writing this report falls on the third Custodian who has been in charge this year, so it will be rather difficult to tie all the loose ends together. Acting Custodian Duane Jacobs was in charge at the beginning of the year and carried on till December 2, when he joined the United States Navy. He took his best training at San Diego, California, and remained in that city on duty with the Shore Patrol. Frank R. Givens, District Ranger from Yosemite, replaced Duane Jacobs and was in charge from February 12, 1944 till May 6, when former Superintendent Cole returned to duty as Custodian. Clerk-Ranger Ketchum was in charge during the interim between Jacobs and Givens.

Weather Conditions

Maximum temperature for the year	115 on July 25, 1943.
Minimum temperature for the year	26 on January 8, 1944.
Average maximum for the year	62
Average minimum for the year	51
Total rainfall at Twentynine Palms for the year	- 9.95 inches.
Total rainfall at Split Rock in the monument	- 7.29 inches.
There were	242 clear days, 73 partly cloudy days, and 80 cloudy.

The outstanding event as regards the weather was the heavy rain on the afternoon and evening of October 9, 1943, when 3.90 inches of rain fell, within a small area, in about three hours. Much damage was done in the community. The office had a film of mud on the floor. Fortunately the rainfall was light in the monument, and practically no damage was done to the roads.

Several times during the winter the western part of the monument was covered with a blanket of snow. This was fairly deep in the higher areas, and lasted for more than a week.

Hot Air Balloons

The two aircraft warning stations installed by the U. S. Forest Service for the Fourth Fighter Command, U. S. Army, were manned from

July 1, 1943 to October 20, 1943. The observation building and other improvements have not been removed. Since the Special Use Permit covering these stations was issued for the duration and six months thereafter, and since it is not impossible that an emergency might arise necessitating the activation of these posts again, permission was granted by Custodian Givens to leave the buildings and other improvements until war conditions are such that there will be no further use for them.

With the inactivation of Camp Young and the California-Arizona Manuever Area there have been no further requests for use of the monument by the U. S. Army.

Grazing

Finally, after these many years, the monument grazing problem has been solved. In dealing with stockmen who have preempted lands for their use without regard to ownership, many problems result. It is believed that by taking a firm stand with these stockmen, the Park Service has gained the upper hand. It should now be possible, at the conclusion of the national emergency, to clear the monument of all grazing excepting that of owners of lands within the monument. The chief trouble, Wm. F. Keys, removed himself by being convicted of manslaughter, and if he serves a long sentence he will be too old to give further trouble. The present permittee apparently realizes that the Park Service has relaxed its restrictions for the duration only and it is believed he will not protest when his permit expires at the end of the war.

Two other stockmen have requested permission to use the monument lands, but to date none have brought any pressure to bear or pressed their requests.

Maintenance

Superficially the monument roads appear to have withstood a year of light maintenance very well. The test will come with summer and winter rains. Due to a change in Custodianship and to a lack of equipment operators during the winter when the soil was wet and could be worked, the roads were not graded and crowned. When the condition was noted by the third custodian of the year, the ground was dry and could not be worked. If the summer cloudbursts do not fall on the roads no damage will result, but a heavy rainfall on one of the alluvial fans will convert the road into a stream.

Considerable road work was done personally by Jacobs and Ketchum during the early part of this fiscal year, as it was impossible to secure equipment operators.

Land Status

If there is any one problem bigger than others at Joshua Tree, these two words indicate and define it. In the past, planning was on the basis of developments on Government owned land, but more and more it is realized that no further development can be made until the privately owned lands are acquired. Consequently, all proposed improvements from now on will be worked out on the basis that the lands will be acquired, and that no development will be done until the important pieces of alienated land are Federally owned.

In general, the problem now is not much worse than it has been in former years. The mining situation is well in hand due to the shortage of men and materials and to the lack of strategic minerals in the monument. The iron mines in the southeastern part of the monument are not being developed, and probably will not be for many years.

The Southern Pacific Land Company is apparently cooperating with the Park Service in that their recent listings of lands for sale do not include any of their holdings in the monument. It is likely, however, that the company would sell large blocks of land in the monument if the terms of their earlier listings were met.

During the past year there have been several sales of parcels of private land in the monument. Two homesteaders have sold portions of their lands to five other individuals. Another homesteader sold his entire property to a real estate operator who is planning to subdivide the land for cabin sites. More of the many small lots of land in Pinto Basin are being sold to the State for taxes. Since none of these are being purchased at tax sales, it is probable that the Riverside County officials are still cooperating with the Park Service by prohibiting the sale of these lots to outsiders.

Work is progressing slowly on the "Tract Record and Valuation" sheets. Locating the extent of the privately owned land on the ground is the most difficult part of the job, especially where the land was surveyed eighty or more years ago. Emphasis is being placed on lands on which roads exist and other developments are proposed. All such proposed developments will be made dependent on the acquisition of the privately owned land.

General Publicity

There has been no general publicity of the monument although a great many people who have been stationed in this area due to the war effort have learned about the area. Now that the U. S. Navy is to start training fliers at Twentynine Palms another group will have an opportunity to visit the monument.

Travel

Visitation to the monument has fallen to a very low level. Most of it consists of residents of Twentynine Palms who are working here in connection with the air training program, or visitors who are spending some time in this community. Each week-end a real estate promoter brings several car loads of people from the Los Angeles area. These people usually have their Sunday morning breakfast in the monument. During the hot summer months the old timers picnic at their favorite spots in the cooler parts of this area.

Forest Fire Protection

Due to the efforts of the Regional Forester, there are now two State pumps available at Twentynine Palms for monument fires. One pump is loaned to the Park Service for patrols with the understanding that it will go to adjacent areas for suppression of County fires. The other pump is permanently stationed at Twentynine Palms.

During the past year considerable thought has been given to fire planning. It is hoped there will be time this year to get these thoughts on paper.

Police Protection

The simple answer to this heading is that there is nothing to report because there is no police protection. The monument is so large and there are so many roads and points of access that the present personnel could not provide police protection if they devoted all their time to it. Fortunately, the scarcity of gasoline and the necessity of conserving rubber prevents many hunters from visiting this area. The lack of miners and nestlers provides the greatest protection to wildlife. There are at present only five miners and one nestler living in the monument. Only one of these lives in an area where he could do any damage to wildlife.

James E. Cole,
Custodian.