

2261

July 1, 1947

MEMORANDUM for the Director.

CUSTODIAN'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL MONUMENT

Weather Conditions

Maximum temperature for the year, 114° on August 2  
Minimum temperature for the year, 25° on December 29  
Total rainfall for the year, 3.88"  
Total rainfall this calendar year to date, .19"

The past year has been characterized by exceptionally dry conditions. More springs, waterholes, tanks and reservoirs have dried up than for many years.

Personnel

On February 25 Custodian James E. Cole left the Monument to enter on duty as Regional Biologist in Region Two. Mr. Cole had served as Custodian for six years. It was mainly through his untiring efforts that this area has gained significance and importance, particularly to Southern California. Too much credit cannot be given Mr. Cole in dealing with the obstacles inherent in developing a new area, particularly one with such a complicated land problem.

On March 4 Frank R. Givens entered on duty as Custodian after serving in a similar capacity in Pinnacles National Monument. Mr. Givens had previously served as Acting Custodian, from February to May 1944, just prior to Mr. Cole's return from military service.

Proposed Boundary Changes

On March 26 Congressman Sheppard introduced a Bill, H. R. 5795, to revise the boundaries of the Monument. This Bill differs only slightly from H. R. 4705 which Mr. Sheppard introduced November 15, 1945, and which died in committee.

Opposition to the Bill is believed to be as great as ever, but the opposition is considerably less voluble. They are known to be working, quietly to some extent, against the Bill. Supporters of the Monument are also working quietly for the Bill since it appears that interested parties have already formed an opinion and are not apt to be converted.

Status of Private Lands

The following is a summary of Joshua Tree National Monument land status as of June 30, 1947:

<b>Federal Lands</b>	<b>658,125.7</b>
<b>State School Lands</b>	<b>21,225.9</b>
<b>State School Lands (Right of Selection 18,225)</b>	
<b>Southern Pacific Land Company</b>	<b>121,250.4</b>
<b>Other Private Lands</b>	<b>21,505.6</b>
<b>State of California Tax-deeded Lands</b>	<b>6,724.6</b>
<b>State of California (Sold for Taxes)</b>	<b>2,000.0</b>
<b>Metropolitan Water District R/W, Etc.</b>	<b>1,624.1</b>
<b>Total Acreage</b>	<b>838,258.3</b>

The land acquisition program being the most pressing problem, a large portion of the Custodian's and Rangers' time was devoted to paper work in connection with land exchanges designed primarily to acquire lands within the Monument presently owned by the Southern Pacific Land Company. The program is progressing satisfactorily although no exchanges have actually been consummated to date. There are currently twelve exchanges in progress which may be recapitulated as follows:

- 2 Formal applications submitted comprising 20,794 acres
- 4 Informal applications submitted comprising 48,495 acres
- 6 Exchanges initiated which will comprise approximately 16,707 acres

Assuming that all these exchanges are carried through to completion, we will acquire approximately 88,996 acres of the 185,135 acres now in private ownership. About 30,000 acres are being held in reserve in the event it is decided to enter into a land exchange agreement with the City of Los Angeles. Any remaining acreage of Southern Pacific land can be exchanged out by entering into negotiations with some of the many interested parties who have evinced an interest in our land program but have been put on a waiting list pending further developments.

In Riverside County there are approximately 2000 parcels comprising 15,679 acres of privately-owned lands, some of which are tax-deeded, some tax-sold, some redeemed or partially redeemed and some taxes-paid. Negotiations have been carried on with the Riverside County Board of Supervisors in an effort to get them to have the lands classified as being most suitable for public use with a view toward transferring them, by exchange or otherwise, to the Federal Government. They evinced some interest, but finally rejected the proposal, probably because of their sympathetic attitude toward the miners and for various other reasons.

There remain 22,000 acres of State School lands and approximately 18,000 acres upon which the State reserves the right to select on unsurveyed lands.

Unfortunately, all of our land problems will not be solved by acquisition of Southern Pacific property, State School lands, etc. The past year has brought increased activity on the part of individual owners who have bought 18,225.9 acres of Southern Pacific lands in the Monument for purely speculative purposes. Wells are being drilled in the vicinity of Quail Springs and the

Wonderland of Rocks, two of the more popular areas from the standpoint of tourist travel. Once water is developed on this privately-owned land there will be nothing to deter the speculators from subdividing their property. It is not necessary to point out what a subdivision would do to the value of the Monument as a recreational area.

Mr. Whitlow, owner of about 2015 acres, comprising a portion of the Wonderland of Rocks, has drilled two wells and built a house on his land. He clearly intends to subdivide. The matter of adequate water may be a deterrent.

Mr. James F. Whitehorn, owner of about 1281 acres near the north boundary and along the Joshua Tree entrance road, has ordered a record of survey to be made of his lands within the Monument. He has drilled one well. It is hoped that the County Planning Commission will not approve the record of survey without proof of adequate water and for other reasons.

### Road Maintenance

Cloudbursts during the period July 18-August 9 did considerable damage to our primary road system and necessitated temporary closing of the Twenty-nine Palms entrance. An additional allotment of Roads and Trails funds made it possible to supplement our road crew and rent equipment from the Forest Service that enabled us to repair our roads in time for the fall and winter influx of visitors.

Maintenance of our <sup>78.5</sup>78.80 miles of primary roads, <sup>36.8</sup>36.30 miles of secondary roads and 88.50 miles of administrative and protective roads requires constant and considerable work. The nature of the soil is such that with each passing vehicle a considerable amount of the native binding material is removed by the wind. This will require periodical replacement of the road surface with decomposed granite until such time that application of a dust palliative can be made.

The normal road maintenance crew consists of a mixed gang foreman and five crew members. During November and December the crew was increased, equipment was rented from the U. S. Forest Service and the roads damaged by flash floods and heavy usage were brought back to their normal condition.

### Trail Maintenance

Trail maintenance funds and trail work were limited. Repair work was done on the 1.1 mile trail to Pine Spring, the 3-mile trail from Cottonwood Spring to Lost Palms Canyon and the 1.3 mile trail to 49 Palms Canyon.

Since most of our trails lead to waterholes, all repairs will be kept to a minimum until such time that we are in a better position to provide adequate protection to the wildlife.

### Property Acquisition under Public Law 478

During the year we have received, or there is en route, the following

**equipment:**

Gasoline rock drill	New	461.00
Weapons carrier	Very poor	894.69
Oil distributor, 600-gal.	Used-good	986.88
Oil or water tank - trailer, 1000-gal.	Used-good	1038.45
Quonset hut, 80x48	New	638.28
*Roller, wobble wheel	New	688.10
*Tractor, wheeled	New	975.00

\*En route

In addition we have requested, and hope to receive, a new  $\frac{3}{4}$ -ton GMC cargo truck, a new 3-ton dump truck, a new Graco lubricating unit, a used weapons carrier and a used D-6 bulldozer.

From our experience and many inspections of equipment in Southern California we have concluded that a thorough inspection of used equipment is essential. Also, that new equipment will generally be available and is naturally more desirable.

Travel

During the past fiscal year travel increased 30% over the previous fiscal year. While we know that travel has increased, the indicated percentage may or may not be accurate since figures during the year just passed resulted from traffic counters at various entrances. Figures during the preceding year were "guesstimated".

Our figures indicate that 13,410 cars with 46,936 visitors entered the Monument. Our inability to contact these visitors is regrettable, but the necessary office detail is more than our contact force can handle. Our road crews and Fire Control Aid make many contacts and render such assistance as is indicated. The regular contact personnel give special attention to groups and parties when time permits.

Investigation of New Park Areas and Boundary Changes

Custodian Cole submitted a report on the proposed Palm Canyon National Monument dated February 7, 1947. The report urged serious consideration of the almost insurmountable obstacles before a decision to establish a Monument was made.

Custodian Cole submitted a report on the proposed Cima Dome National Monument. The opinion was that the area did not merit National Monument status.

The Riverside County Board of Supervisors is attempting to establish a National Monument in honor of General George S. Patton. The desired location is near the south boundary of Joshua Tree National Monument. Mr. Walter V. Pittman, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, in an unofficial conference, requested the writer's reaction toward the proposed Monument. He was advised that this office could not discuss or support new areas without proper instructions. Consequently, the subject was not brought up in a subsequent

appearance of the Custodian before the Board in session relative to tax-loaded lands within the Monument.

### Special Use Permits

On June 11, 1947, two representatives of the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company called to reopen negotiations for a permit to locate a radio transmitter station near Keys View. Several sites were studied and the representatives were requested to submit a written request for further study by Service personnel. Their ultimate plan has not crystallized and they may decide on some other location.

On June 25 the Custodian contacted Mr. A. H. Hadfield of the Civil Aeronautics Administration, Santa Monica, California, relative to their request for use of eighty acres outside the Monument but within the area withdrawn for Monument use. To date they are undecided on the final location.

In December, 1946, the Kaiser Company submitted a request for a special use permit covering use of Government lands incidental to mining operations on their property in the Monument. To date the permit has not been approved.

A grazing permit for eighty head of cattle was issued for a period of six months, beginning October 1, to Mr. James W. Stocker. The price per head per month was \$.1685. The San Bernardino National Forest charges \$.31 per head per month. A reduced rate was accorded Mr. Stocker because about one-half the lands (alternate sections) are privately-owned.

### Forest Fire Protection

A Fire Control Aid, SP-4, and a relief Fire Control Aid, SP-3, make daily patrols of the Monument roads beginning in June. Since the Custodian and two rangers are required to spend most of their time in the office, the Aids render invaluable service.

A Dodge weapons carrier, four-wheel drive, is being equipped with a 100-gallon tank and a Panama pump to be used for patrol work.

A 1000-gallon water tank and a 600-gallon oil distributor, both trailer-mounted, are being prepared for use on large fires. Each unit is equipped with a gasoline driven pump. Efforts are being made to adapt these tanks for use as fire fighting units without impairing the use for which originally intended.

Frank R. Givens  
Custodian

May 14, 1947

MEMORANDUM for the Director.

The following report of major events or developments in Joshua Tree National Monument is submitted in accordance with Memorandum for all Region Four Field Areas dated May 5, 1947.

Status of Private Lands

The following is a summary of Joshua Tree National Monument land status as of May 14, 1947:

Federal Lands	653,123.7
State School Lands	21,358.9
State School Lands (Right of Selection)(18,253)	
Southern Pacific Land Company	121,350.4
Other Private Lands	31,503.6
State of California Tax-deeded Lands	6,784.6
State of California (Sold for Taxes)	2,003.0
Metropolitan Water District R/W, Etc.	<u>1,634.1</u>
Total Acreage	838,258.3

The land acquisition program being the most pressing problem, a large portion of the Custodian's and Rangers' time was devoted to paper work in connection with land exchanges designed primarily to acquire lands within the Monument presently owned by the Southern Pacific Land Company. The program is progressing satisfactorily although no exchanges have actually been consummated to date. There are currently twelve exchanges in progress which may be recapitulated as follows:

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- 4 Informal applications submitted comprising 48,435 acres**
- 6 Exchanges initiated which will comprise approximately 16,707 acres**

Assuming that all these exchanges are carried through to completion, we will acquire approximately 95,936 acres of the 168,135 acres now in private ownership. About 50,000 acres are being held in reserve in the event it is decided to enter into a land exchange agreement with the City of Los Angeles. Any remaining acreage of Southern Pacific land can be exchanged out by entering into negotiations with some of the many interested parties who have evinced an interest in our land program but have been put on a waiting list pending further developments.

In Riverside County there are approximately 2000 parcels comprising 15,879 acres of privately-owned lands, some of which are tax-deeded, some tax-sold, some redeemed or partially redeemed and some taxes-paid. Negotiations have been carried on with the Riverside County Board of Supervisors in an effort to get them to have the lands classified as being most suitable for public use with a view toward transferring them, by exchange or otherwise, to the Federal Government. They evinced some interest, but finally rejected the proposal, probably because of their sympathetic attitude toward the miners and for various other reasons.

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#### Vandalism

Among those activities contrary to National Park Service regulations were trapping, unauthorized cattle-running of 45 head of cattle on Monument lands, truckers cutting mesquite (smoke-tree) branches for Christmas decorations and novelty manufacturers gathering cholla cactus trunks. Much evidence of target shooting was seen in the Monument during the year, riddled tin cans and broken bottles around camping areas being common. Many road signs were badly mutilated and had to be replaced, and a new sign at Hidden Valley was stolen less than two weeks after erection.

A Joshua-tree was chopped down at Hidden Valley Campground, Juniper branches cut from trees along the Keys View Road, ocotillo canes cut and smaller plants uprooted and abandoned. Cacti, bismaga, cholla, beavertail and other varieties were dug up and left to die.



The Custodian, two Rangers and members of the road crew interrupted some visitors in their destructive activities, warning them about hunting, target practice, picking and digging up shrubs and flowers, etc. However, the amount of protective work performed was seriously limited by the press of office work. There is every indication that lack of protection will continue to be the rule rather than the exception until clerical assistance is received or office work decreases.

Frank R. Givens  
Custodian

cc: Region Four