

July 6, 1948

MEMORANDUM for the Director.

CUSTODIAN'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL MONUMENT

Weather Conditions

Maximum temperature for the year, 115° on July 19
Minimum temperature for the year, 29° on January 29
Total rainfall for the year, 1.89 inches. Normal 5.03 inches.
Total rainfall this calendar year to date, .65 inches. Normal, 1.54 inches

The past year was characterized by exceptionally dry conditions. Since the preceding year was also exceptionally dry it enables us to determine which springs and waterholes are the most dependable and what might be expected in a desert area during a dry period.

Proposed Boundary Changes

Congressman Sheppard's Bill, HR 2795, introduced on March 26, 1947, has received considerable criticism by all factions opposing the Monument regardless of its effect, if passed, on the individuals themselves. Even though the Bill would eliminate and open up over 200,000 acres of mineralized land the Mining Association violently opposed the Bill.

The House Public Lands Sub-Committee held hearings in San Bernardino on October 1, 1947. A number of problems, among them the Sheppard Bill, were heard by the Committee. The opponents of the Bill were numerous and varied. They were also vociferous. Several supporters of the Monument, not necessarily proponents of the Bill, spoke in behalf of the measure.

Some Monument supporters feel it might have been better for the Service to have opposed the measure or at least to have assumed an attitude of indifference because our opponents fight every measure which we favor. However, we can now point out that the miners had their chance to get 210,000 acres of the more highly mineralized sections but opposed the measure.

Status of Private Lands

The following is a summary of the land status as of June 30, 1948:

Federal Lands	653,122.79 acres
State School Lands	21,528.90 " "
State School Lands (Right of Selection 18,233)*	
Southern Pacific Land Company	117,002.63 " **

Other Private Lands	24,021.97 acres	
State of California Tax-foreclosed	6,754.00	" ***
State of California (Sold for taxes)	2,000.00	" ***
Metropolitan Water District R.W., etc.	1,627.97	"
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	34,403.94	"

* These figures subject to revision upward. State School claims 22,590.87 acres School land plus 21,600.00 acres right of selection on unsurveyed lands. Any revision upward would reduce the Federal Land acreage by a corresponding amount.

** This acreage is smaller than previously reported. The previous figure was based on Southern Pacific lands as of 1942. Subsequent to 1942 the Southern Pacific Company sold approximately 4,347.97 acres to private individuals. Other Private Lands have been increased by this amount.

*** These figures will be subject to revision downward due to owners redeeming their land on the strength of Monument development.

The following is a list of actions now in process in an effort to acquire alienated lands within the Monument:

Southern Pacific Lands:

Curtis Exchange	16,833.93 acres
Allen Exchange	1,917.60 "
Trottier Exchange	1,600.00 "
McClellan Exchange	3,207.52 "
Dever Exchange	4,072.54 "
Southern Pacific (Salton) Exchange	2,240.00 "
Southern Pacific (Yuma) Exchange	640.00 "
City of Needles exchange	5,820.34 "
National Park Service outright purchase	<u>12,824.24</u> "
	51,548.69

State School Lands:

Exchange application by State dated March 26, 1948	9,600.00 acres
Exchange application by State dated March 25, 1945	<u>24,590.87</u> "
	34,190.87 " *

*This includes all State School land in Monument that is owned or claimed by right of selection.

There are 68,454.54 acres of Southern Pacific land not encountered in any acquisition procedure. About 15 applicants are desirous of entering exchange applications which, based on their desired lands, would more than eliminate this acreage.

Our largest exchange application, by Mr. Seth Brady, involving 88,800.00 acres, collapsed in February after the lands had been examined and appraised. It was learned that some person other than Mr. Brady owned the Southern Pacific sections intermingled with the selected sections and Mr. Brady did not produce evidence that he was financially able to consummate the exchange.

The Bureau of Land Management in Los Angeles has received instructions to publish public notices on the following exchanges: Curtis, 18,888.88 acres; McClean, 8,887.88 acres; Southern Pacific (Salton), 8,840.00 acres; (the number of acres shown are those within the Monument that will be acquired by the Government).

The Dever, Trottier and Allen Exchanges have been reported upon but we have not heard that they have received Departmental approval.

During the year we were threatened with various private land developments and subdivisions. The slump in desert real estate transactions has temporarily reduced the threat.

Mining

Mining conversation is very active but actual production is at a standstill. We know of no gold mine that is producing although a large number are being improved and developed mainly, we believe, to make them presentable to prospective investors.

The Goat Basin Mine, which was played up considerably by our local opponents, went bankrupt. Their failure, and inability to pay their debts to local creditors, did not cause the Service any harm. However, their mill is being moved to a new location which offers better possibilities.

The Mission Mine and Milling Company has spent an enormous amount of money in improving their property. They plan to do custom milling as well as operate their own mine. The project is being financed by a Mr. O'Connor, a wealthy Los Angeles auctioneer.

A local chapter of the Western Mining Council was organized during the year. A meeting was held in Twentynine Palms attended by approximately 800 miners, land promoters, homesteaders, etc. They are apparently attempting to organize all opponents of the Monument to make a concerted attempt to open the area to each of their several exploiting schemes.

Considerable activity is in evidence at the Kaiser Mine in the eastern part of the Monument. The new railroad and crushers are about completed and many new buildings have been erected. The amount and grade of ore is reported to be satisfactory for profitable operation for many years to come.

Protection

It is very difficult to evaluate the damage done to the botanical specimens in this area. The flower display along secondary roads is superior to

that along primary roads. The display in areas away from all roads is far superior to that along any road. The many visitors take home "just one plant" which nibbling process is beginning to result in the reduction of the more spectacular plants like the casti.

Wildlife appears to be holding its own - reproduction offsets the occasional killing by hunters. However, deer and sheep are far more scarce (almost never seen by visitors) than if adequate patrols could be made.

An area containing 633,200 acres, 82 possible entry roads and 202 miles of roads, plus untold miles of old roads remaining from prospecting activity, cannot be adequately protected by the custodian and two rangers who have no clerical help and who are required to spend practically all their time in the headquarters office at Twentynine Palms. Not only have the three employees been unable to take their annual leave but they have not been able to take their compensatory time off.

Road Maintenance

Increased travel and smoother roads, resulting in faster travel, tend to make oiled roads almost a necessity. Each car removes a considerable amount of soil (dust) which not only requires replacing but causes discomfort to visitors.

Bids were received for spraying dust palliative on two 5-mile sections of road, one in Indian Cove and one section just inside the Twentynine Palms entrance. The bid is now awaiting the Director's approval or disapproval. Not only is the oil treatment necessary to maintain good road conditions but it would indicate that the Monument is endeavoring to develop the area and improve the roads as soon as the alienated lands can be acquired. This would gain some much-needed support from residents of adjacent communities.

Considerably more maintenance was made possible through more efficiency by the acquisition of three dump trucks, a tractor-mounted dirt loader, a GMC 6x6, a low bed trailer, portable service station and some minor items. An effort is being made to bring the roads back up to grade by replacing road material, removed by passing cars, with decomposed granite which is more stable than the normal sand roads. Building up the roads will not only result in better dirt roads but will provide a more stable base if and when the dust palliative treatment becomes possible.

The 78.5 miles of minor primary roads are kept in good condition except for a 5-mile section through Pinto Basin which will require hauling many loads of decomposed granite. The 36.8 miles of minor secondary roads are just passable for drivers who know the desert. About one round trip per year with the maintainer is all that our force can accomplish. The 88.5 miles of Administrative and Protection roads receive almost no attention other than merely keeping them passable for our own equipment.

Two 4200-gallon oil storage tanks, acquired under PL 478, were erected near the Pinto "Y" road junction. They will be used for storing road oil to be used in repairing roads which are proposed to be treated with a dust

palliative in the near future.

The erection of a temporary road equipment storage shed, acquired under PL 478, was started in the area near Pinto "Y" road junction. This protection is greatly needed for our several pieces of new equipment due to extreme weather conditions. Too, there is considerable thievery from the equipment when it is left parked in the open.

Property Acquired under P. L. 478

During the past year we received the following equipment under PL 478:

Trucks, 10-ton (2 each)	Unused
Weapons Carrier	Used-good
D-6 Caterpillar Bulldozer	Used-good
GM Cargo Truck	Used-good
Generating Plant, KVA	Unused
Typewriter	Used-good
Cutting outfits (2 each)	Used-good
Gasoline storage tanks (3 each)	Unused
Bench grinder	Used-good

This area was fortunate in receiving very good equipment and just in time. During the past year the quality of offered equipment changed from very good at the beginning of the year to very poor near the end. Our recent observations are that only an occasional piece of acceptable equipment can be expected from agencies in Southern California.

Travel

During the fiscal year travel increased 29% over the previous year. Travel figures, based on automatic traffic counters and estimates on roads not having traffic counters, indicate that 17,502 cars entered the Monument. Using an average of 3½ visitors per car, which during spot checks was found to be very close, we estimate that 60,558 visitors entered the Monument.

Forest Fire Protection

During the past fiscal year this area had only one reportable fire. On June 23 the 49 Palms Oasis was burned through the carelessness of two juvenile boys playing with fire. A total of 44 large palms were entirely burned except for the trunks, 6 were partly burned and 3 were untouched. Eighteen small palms were partly burned. It is expected that a number of the large palms will put out new fronds and survive. The 49 Palms fire was confined to 1½ acres.

One SP-4 Fire Control Aid and one SP-3 Fire Control Aid make daily patrols in the Monument during fire season which is generally from May 15 to October 15. Each Aid uses a weapons carrier converted to a fire patrol truck, one of which is a pumper truck, the other being equipped with a number of backpacks.

Radio sets are installed in each of the patrol trucks. The sets operate on the California State Division of Forestry frequency. The trucks can send and receive messages through Indio, Perris or San Bernardino when they are in locations where they cannot contact the Twentynine Palms station.

A comprehensive 2-day fire training school was completed on June 21. The program called for active participation on the part of the entire personnel consisting of 11 employees.

Firewarden badges, obtained through the State Division of Forestry, are held by Givens, Stratton, Karenfight, Camp and Lake.

Safety

No employees of this area were involved in accidents or sustained injuries requiring treatment. No visitor sustained an injury as far as we know although two cars collided, due to excessive speed, and one car turned over on its side in attempting to negotiate a curve at high speed. There were probably other accidents involving visitor cars but they were not reported.

Although our force consists of only eleven employees we feel fortunate in having a perfect safety record, particularly since most of the force is steadily engaged in operating heavy road equipment.

With one exception, and this is being corrected, all our motorized equipment is provided with a first aid kit and a carbon tetrachloride fire extinguisher. In addition to this, a number of our vehicles carry backpack pump as an additional precaution in case of fire.

Conclusion

Too frequently the importance of an area is judged by its improvements and developments and not by what the area has to offer. An otherwise favorable impression is completely nullified by lack of facilities particularly in a National Park Service area where high standard accommodations are expected.

We appreciate the difficulty of making any development or definite plans in this area with its complex land problems. Whatever excuse we have it does not satisfy our many users and it behooves us to make such developments as are possible at the earliest possible date.

A large development is not indicated in this area but what is needed is of great importance. Campgrounds with tables and fireplaces, toilets and garbage facilities would require a relatively small appropriation and would completely change the atmosphere of the area which is now one of neglect. A small interpretive shelter at Keys View should receive early attention. Oiled roads are highly desirable but are not our most urgent need.

Joshua Tree National Monument is 12 years old and has not received one cent for new construction or physical improvements. We hope to be able

to more fully justify our needs in the future and clear the obstacles that have prevented development of the area.

Frank R. Givens
Custodian

cc: Region Four