

VIA AIR MAIL

June 3, 1953

**Memorandum**

**To: The Director**

**From: Superintendent, Joshua Tree**

**Subject: Annual Report of Officials in Charge of Field Areas**

**Personnel:**

Frank R. Givens, Superintendent, transferred to  
Acadia National Park, April 13, 1953  
Samuel A. King, April 13 to present  
Heamel L. Earenfight, Supervisory Park Ranger  
Alva D. Conner, Mixed Gang Foreman  
Robert S. Lake, Mixed Gang Foreman, Disability Retirement  
April 15, 1953  
John R. Bianco, Light Truck Driver  
Harrison Y. Boling, Laborer Leadman, Disability Retirement  
April 30, 1953  
Mrs. Maczie C. Van Tassell, Clerk-Typist

In addition three permanent positions are unencumbered  
namely, Operator General, Laborer Leadman, and Laborer. One seasonal  
ranger position is encumbered from November 1, 1952 through April, 1953.

During the fire season three Fire Control Aids are hired,  
two full time and one on a W.A.E. basis.

From one to three intermittent laborers are also hired for  
road and maintenance work as required.

We are fortunate in having a competent staff and the fruits  
of their efforts are shown in the accomplishments attained in all  
phases of activity during the year. Supervisory Ranger Earenfight  
has proven to be a tower of strength not only in the protection program  
but in planning and administrative programs as well.

Travel:

Travel trends indicate an ever growing interest in Joshua Tree National Monument and if present trends continue, travel for this calendar year will probably reach a total of 200,000 visitors. Travel to the end of May, 1953 showed a total of 100,379 visitors. The densely populated metropolitan area around Los Angeles is the greatest contributing factor in this increased visitation.

Intensive weekend use of campground facilities was indicated throughout the year, with a high percentage of visitors who brought light trailers. A veritable exodus of trailerites from the Metropolitan area heading for the monument was noted over the main highway leading to the monument each weekend.

Large organized groups numbering as many as 688 persons made use of campground facilities throughout the year. They included Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Young Mens Christian Association, Camp Fire Girls, Salvation Army Youth Center groups, numerous college and university field study groups, Sierra Club and nearby grammar school and high school groups. Indications are that these groups plan to return next year as part of their regular outdoor activities.

Some idea of early summer travel trends were indicated for the month of May 1953, which, showed an increase of 45.09% over May, 1952!

Lands:

In this fiscal year deeds have been received, or information indicates that they are about to be received to 35,789.01 acres of privately owned land within the monument:

Deed #13	3193.44 acres	Nelson Exchange
" #14	14473.61 "	Ritter Bros. Exchange
" #15	3840.00 "	Bishop Exchange
	160.00 "	Keiper "
	8103.86 "	Newton "
	1280.68 "	Hensler "
	646.12 "	So. Pac. Co. (Staley) Exchange
	50.00 "	Allen Exchange
	649.00 "	So. Pac. Co. (Yuma) Exchange
	2221.40 "	Riddell Exchange
	120.00 "	Moninger "
	25789.01 "	acquired during 1953 F.Y.

With the influx of people to Southern California, and the military development at Twentynine Palms, a real estate boom is under way in this vicinity. Owners of private lands in the monument are becoming interested in disposal of their lands to private individuals. Mr. W. L. Monstad, owner of 800 acres in Queen Valley, has dragged a road on his property, and proposes to drill a well and subdivide. This development would be in full view of visitors from the highway through Queen Valley. Letters have been written Mr. Monstad regarding a possible exchange or purchase of this land but no answer has been received to date.

Mr. Joe Wachowski of Manistee, Michigan, holding a deed to 960 acres in Pinto Basin, including the Cocotillo Patch, was written inquiring if he would be interested in selling this holding at an appraised price. This private land is hindering the improvement of the western portion of the Pinto Basin Road.

The negotiations between Mr. L. M. Moninger and Mr. Whitlow are continuing for the purchase of approximately 5 sections and improvements in Lost Horse Valley. These sections would be used for base for exchange by Mr. Moninger for public lands desired by him. Mr. Whitlow has now sold three parcels, adjoining the Hidden Valley Campground on the north to private individuals. One of these parcels intrudes on the campground at the north end.

Messrs. Gribbin and Peterson are interested in acquiring sections of public domain near Desert Center, California. This is some of the land which was once being considered in the Bright Exchange. They are interested in buying the Mookman (3800 acres) Wilson and Cummings (2560 acres) and the Tallman (1925.58 acres) holdings for exchange purposes.

An exchange is being worked up between the Regional office and Mr. Guy E. Pyle of Witter Springs, to exchange 205.9 acres in Pinto Basin for land in Northern California.

Plans for condemnation of tax-deeded lands in Pinto Basin are being formulated in the Regional office. A list of tax-deeded property is being compiled, and when completed will be transmitted to the Washington office.

The miners are becoming more active, posting several valid claims or those not in the process of being adversed at the present time. Mining activity is at a minimum, but the claimants evidently use the sites for winter homes and weekend cabins in the monument. Practically every water hole is posted as a mill site, including Pine Spring, Stubby Spring, Pine Cistern, Squaw Tank, Johnny Lang Well and the Winona Mill Site at the Cottonwood area. The Maxwell claim was surveyed and mapped. As suspected, it was found to be on monument lands.

### Public Relations:

Relations with various civic groups and county and city officials were established and maintained through the efforts of Superintendent Givens and members of the local staff. General support of the monument and the Service on a local level is indicated as a result of these efforts.

Recent meetings with members of the Base Line Highway Association and the Coachella Valley Advisory Planning Commission, advocates of another road (Blue Cut) through the monument, ended in disagreement but on a cordial plane.

Another group representing the Joshua Tree Chamber of Commerce are advocating that this Service expedite the surfacing of the Joshua Tree Entrance Road (hinges on acquisition of private lands).

Additional meetings are scheduled with both the above groups at which time we hope to satisfy them that our pending programs are adequate and in the public interest.

### Improvements:

Present indications are that our proposed administration building at the Oasis of Mara will be constructed early in the 1954 Fiscal Year. Bid-invitations and specifications are being accomplished on a regional level and it is hoped that a favorable bid may be forthcoming so that construction can be initiated right after July 1, 1953.

San Bernardino County officials (Board of Supervisors) have indicated their desire to cancel the lease on our present offices on June 30, but will allow our continued occupancy on a month to month basis, providing we start construction on our own offices on or about July 1, 1953.

### Protection:

The impact of greater usage through increased visitation has left the park rather conspicuously adjacent to our several public campgrounds as evidenced by the destruction of native vegetation. This stems from cutting of trees and shrubs by campers for utilization as fire wood.

We are presently supplying scrap fire wood at all campgrounds on an experimental basis, pending the outcome of the possibility of placing wood-venting machines at each campground. Another possibility to cope with this situation would be the venting of wood (in sacks) through a Natural History Association.

Considerable evidence of shooting was indicated by spent shells found along the various roads. Admittedly a portion of this shooting may be construed as target practice; but it is believed that in many cases the targets were small mammals or birds. A large number of directional signs were likewise shot up by gunners. Many individuals, especially teen-age boys with B-B guns were contacted by the rangers before they had an opportunity to shoot some of the lesser wildlife.

Because of the large territory we have to cover, it is not possible to afford adequate protection to the area with present staffing. It appears that in order to cope with this increased vandalism, the minimum protection requirements for the monument would be a Chief Ranger, two permanent Park Rangers, two seasonal Park Rangers during the winter months (one seasonal ranger position already established).

#### Wildlife:

39 Bighorn Sheep have been reported seen. The majority have been observed during the month of August in the vicinity of Stubby Spring. At the present time, based on reports by hikers, Lost Palms Canyon has an abundance of activity, including some lambs.

13 Male deer have been reported with the majority seen during the month of August in the vicinity of Pine Spring. A total of 4 fawns have been seen at Willow Hole, Black Rock Spring, and Quail Spring.

There have been signs of Cougar.

Two bobcats have been reported seen and signs observed at most rocky areas such as Squaw Tank, Stirrup Tank, Jumbo Rocks, and Indian Cove.

A few coyotes have been seen.

There have been no fox seen although there are frequent signs.

One badger has been reported and signs observed frequently in Lost Horse Valley and Juniper Flat.

Fresh signs of skunk have been observed at Willow Hole.

Jack rabbits are in abundance with many killed daily on monument roads. The lack of coyotes is probably the reason for abundance of rabbits.

The Beechey Ground Squirrel is increasing rapidly at all campground areas. The reason is probably due to scattered feedstuffs and garbage in barrels.

The Antelope Ground Squirrel is becoming fairly tame at most campgrounds due to scattered feedstuffs and garbage in barrels.

Likewise the Merriam Chipmunk is becoming fairly tame at campgrounds due to food there.

Many coveys of Gambel Quail have been reported, all with large numbers of chicks. This is probably due to lack of predators.

Lack of precipitation, the limited quantity of annuals, and the drying up of some of the water holes, will create a hardship and probably decrease the number of some of the mammals.

Samuel A. King  
Superintendent

cc: Regional Director (2)

July 2, 1953

Memorandum

To: The Director, National Park Service  
From: Superintendent, Joshua Tree  
Subject: Annual Report -- Supplemental Data

I believe it is of sufficient significance to report that a total of 7.7 miles of the Pinto Basin road was oil surfaced during the latter part of June, 1953. This means that only 20.8 miles of this road is gravel surfaced out of a total of 46 miles.

Samuel A. King  
Superintendent

cc: Regional Director (2)