

**JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL MONUMENT  
Twenty-nine Palms, Calif.**

**Refer to A 2623**

**Cover Sheet for Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1955, Joshua Tree  
National Monument.**

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JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL MONUMENT  
Twentynine Palms, Calif..

Memorandum

June 6, 1955

To: The Director  
From: Superintendent, Joshua Tree  
Subject: Annual Report - Fiscal Year 1955

Personnel:

Permanent

Samuel A. King, Superintendent  
Hesselt L. Earenfight, Supervisory Park Ranger  
John S. Adams, Landscape Architect - August 9, 1954 to present  
Mrs. Maesie C. Van Tassell, Clerk-Typist - July 1, 1954 to  
October 21, 1954  
Mrs. Mildred I. Miller, Clerk-Typist - November 8, 1954 to  
present  
Alva D. Conner, Mixed-Gang Foreman  
John R. Bianco, Operator-General  
Paul E. Katz, Laborer

Seasonal:

Ronald D. Miller, Information-Receptionist, July 1, 1955 to  
February 13, 1955  
Charles C. Adams, Jr., Park Ranger, November 11, 1954 to  
May 9, 1955  
Herbert D. Cornell, Park Ranger, September 15, 1954 to March  
26, 1955  
Wendell L. Howard, Laborer, July 6, 1954 to March 17, 1955  
Phil. D. Smith, Laborer, September 27, 1954 to June 3, 1955  
Elmer R. Camp, Laborer, December 13, 1954 to May 27, 1955

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

The position of Information-Receptionist was filled on a two-  
day basis per week ( Saturday and Sunday) at Headquarters, giving much  
needed service to visitors.

One additional Seasonal Ranger position was occupied over the  
period September 20, 1954 to March 26, 1955. While this afforded needed  
protection during the period of heavy use, it is evident that more adequate  
protection on a year around basis , in light of increased use, is impera-  
tive.

Personnel:

The quest for uranium by neophyte prospectors added an extra burden to the inadequate ranger staff to prevent prospecting and the location of illegal claims on park lands.

The need for a full-time naturalist was clearly indicated throughout the year with increased demands for off-area talks, on-the-ground interpretation, and lack of essential research. It was necessary therefore to assign the supervisory park ranger, the seasonal rangers and to some extent, the Superintendent, to various phases of the interpretative program in order to meet minimum requirements by the public.

Better planning on the field land <sup>level</sup> was assured by the transfer of Landscape Architect John S. Adams to Joshua Tree on August 9, 1954.

In addition to the items listed under Maps, Plans and Surveys, Mr. Adams has also initiated field studies for enlargement of various campgrounds within the Monument, completed planting at the Oasis Headquarters Administrative Building, prepared texts for signboards, and assisted the Superintendent in preparing various reports concerning planning and construction matters. Approximately 50% of Mr. Adams' time is spent on work for Death Valley National Monument.

General:

One additional natural history trail was completed and put in operation at Indian Cove in December, 1954. This trail, together with the existing trails, proved to be very popular with a large segment of Monument visitors, many of whom indicated their appreciation by writing short notes on the trail-guide leaflets.

Road maintenance barely kept pace with increased vehicular use of the entire road system. Considerable damage resulted on Route No. 2 from heavy snows and run-off, requiring an abnormal amount of patching.

Dust palliative treatment was applied on some six and one-half miles of Route No. 1 through Pinto Basin, leaving only 10.4 miles of untreated surface on the north-south route through the Monument. This route is becoming increasingly popular by visitors coming from the East on Highway 60-70 who wish to visit Joshua Tree National Monument.

Funds from contingency reserves were made available to us in the amount of \$3800 in May for purchase of 80-2 road oil. These materials amounting to 140 tons were applied as a reseal on Route No. 1 from Seal Rocks to the south boundary. Also an additional 4 mile stretch of the same route was dust palliatively treated, thus reducing the untreated portion of Route No. 2 (Pinto Basin) to six miles only - a real improvement.

Travel:

Travel during 1954 calendar year reached an all-time high of 260,730 visitors. It appears reasonable to predict that 1955 will reach a new high of 300,000 visitors or more. This in light of the fact that travel during the first half of the 1955 calendar has exceeded the previous year by about 20%. The preponderance of visitors are from California, with Los Angeles and environs contributing the greatest number.

Campground use increased in proportion to increased visitation. Organized groups including Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Church groups, and the U. S. Marine Corps were much in evidence throughout the year. This impact was borne largely by the Sheep Pass Group Camp which was established last year, thus relieving the other campgrounds, especially during periods of heavy use.

Lands:

Land Exchanges were disappointing during the last year, both as to amount acquired and the cancellation of two exchanges which were pending. Negotiations with owners of substantial holdings in the Monument indicate that acquisition by purchase is probably the only solution.

The U. S. Attorney's Office in Los Angeles recently filed a suit in Condemnation to acquire some 1100 parcels of tax-deed land in Pinto Basin. Another milestone will be achieved if this action meets with success.

Lands acquired through exchanges during the year were as follows:

Deed No. 20	Allen Exchange	20 acres
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The Carter and Singer purchases on Pinto Basin lands are in the process of completion, deeds having been drawn up, and title searches instituted.

Starting about October 1, 1954, tremendous interest in the search for uranium was generated in Southern California. Erroneous information was disseminated in some quarters that Joshua Tree National Monument was open to prospecting and mining. The result was that many people had to be deterred from locating mining claims on Monument lands by the rangers in the field and through information disseminated at Headquarters. There may be some illegal claims located on Monument lands of which we are not aware.

The Western Mining Council was successful in prevailing on the California Legislature to pass Joint Resolution No. 5, memorializing the President and the Congress of the United States to open Joshua Tree to prospecting and mining. This group has indicated that they will continue to press for legislation to open the monument to unrestricted mining and prospecting.

On the other hand, the Desert Protective Council supported by conservation groups, service clubs and civic organizations, have taken a strong stand supporting the present status of the Monument.

Ever increasing use of Joshua Tree National Monument by the general public for recreation, education and inspirational purposes, far outweighs any use which would impair its natural values. The Monument as it stands today and in the future will contribute to the welfare of this nation's greatest asset, its "Human Resources", in light of which the possible extraction of valuable minerals is insignificant.

Public Relations:

Requests by Service Clubs, Civic Groups, Churches and Schools, for talks on natural history subjects were filled during the year without exception. These included talks at Bellflower High School, Los Angeles; Yuccipa Women's Club; Twentynine Palms High School; Banning Lions Club; Kiwanis Club of Beaumont; Rotary Club, Twentynine Palms; Little Church of the Desert, Twentynine Palms; Marine Wives Club, Twentynine Palms; Claremont Conservation Conference, Balch Hall, Scripps College; Presbyterian Junior High Youth Group, Twentynine Palms; Snake Tree Ranch, Palm Springs; and Boy Scout and Cub Scout Groups in all nearby towns.

The Superintendent appeared before the Desert Protective Council on two occasions, primarily to inform the group regarding the future development plans for Joshua Tree National Monument.

Improvements:

Exhibit panels depicting plant, animal life, and early history of Joshua Tree National Monument were received from the Museum Branch early in March, 1955. These were installed in the Exhibit Room at Headquarters, and have proven to be a great source of interest to Monument visitors.

The gas and oil storage building at the Oasis Site was completed in May, 1955. This building is surrounded by a 5 foot masonry wall erected early in 1955, which completely encloses the utility area.



Protection

As indicated elsewhere in this report the problem of protection is vexing. Some slight improvement in protection may be forthcoming in the Fiscal Year 1956 if funds are appropriated as anticipated for one additional park ranger position. This will not afford adequate protection due to abnormal increase in travel.

The destruction of native shrubs adjacent to campgrounds for use as fuel is making inroads on the vegetative cover. This problem will not be solved until such time as fuel vending facilities are available in each campground. To date we are not aware of any suitable facility for dispensing fuel that is available.

Interpretations

We are grateful to the Museum Branch for constructing the panels now on display in the Exhibit Room at Headquarters. The story of plant adaptation and factors influencing arid conditions on deserts have proven to be of great interest to visitors.

One additional nature trail was installed during the year, this one at Indian Cove. This trail is primarily concerned with botany, but geological information on the area is also included.

During the year arrangements were made with Southwestern National Monuments Association to furnish us with publications to sell at Headquarters for interpretation of the natural history of the area. Sales have been averaging well over \$100 per month. Profits from these sales will be credited to Joshua Tree when we have our own natural history association.

The rough draft of "History of Joshua Tree National Monument", written by W. Egbert Schanck of Twentynine Palms, and Frank E. Givens, former Superintendent of Joshua Tree National Monument, has been reviewed in Washington with notations and corrections, and returned to Joshua Tree for review and has now been re-written and is now ready to submit for final review and possible publication.

Wildlife:

Observations made in the field during the past year indicate that the Bighorn Sheep are at least holding their own. One adult ram succumbed from natural causes at Lost Palms Canyon and one was killed on the Twentynine Palms Highway by an automobile.

The survey contemplated by Dr. Helmut K. Bueschner and Biologist Lowell Sumner may reveal whether or not lung-worm infection is prevalent among the animals.

Deer in the upper reaches of the Monument were observed occasionally but populations are not thought to be increasing.

Coyotes were observed fairly often by both visitors and Monument personnel from the lower to highest elevations.

Rabbits were in evidence but not in great numbers.

The Sonoran Chipmunks are quite numerous in the vicinity of Hidden Valley Campground. Beachey Ground Squirrel continue to multiply in the vicinity of the various campgrounds.

Both Gambel and Mountain Quail are observed throughout the Monument with the former being the most populous.

Striped Skunks are observed around the campground; two trapped in garbage pattrels were released by rangers during the year.

Plans, Maps, Surveys:

A survey made in March by the Bureau of Public Roads of the proposed "Blue Cut" road through Joshua Tree National Monument, indicates that the route is not economically feasible. As a matter of fact the B.P.R. survey reflected construction costs in excess of the figures submitted by Service engineers. The Bureau estimates the "Blue Cut-Yan Hill" route at a total cost of \$1,642,000 and the "Blue Cut-Pasha walla" Canyon Route at \$2,015,000. In addition the report indicates that heavy annual maintenance costs will accrue if the road is constructed.

During the winter months the Geological Survey and Army Engineers worked on map surveys in the southern and northern parts of the Monument.

Plans for the Oasis and Pinto Wye Maintenance Areas were completed or were in the design stage during the year. The following plans were completed in the field: Cottenwood Spring Foot Trail Re-alignment; Directional Sign at Headquarters; Field Data Oasis Maintenance Area; Sign Data; Information Booth; Plans and Details for Exhibit Room; Visitor Use Graph; Engineering Room Addition to Headquarters Building; Topographical Survey, Pinto Wye Utility Area; Preliminary Drawing, Pinto Wye Utility Area.

The Master Plan Development Outline has been rewritten and final submission will be made pending the outcome of the Fee Study Survey.

A number of plans prepared in this office by the resident Landscape Architect for Death Valley National Monument will be listed in the Death Valley Annual Report.

Memorials:

A memorial plaque honoring Mrs. Sherman Hoyt, early advocate for the establishment of Joshua Tree National Monument was dedicated at Salton View on May 30, 1955 at 1:00 P.M.

Dr. Philip Muns, Director of Santa Ana Botanic Garden at Claremont gave the principal address. The plaque was sponsored by the Joshua Tree Womens Club.

Samuel A. King,  
Superintendent