

In reply refer to
A2623

**Joshua Tree National Monument
Twentynine Palms, California**

June 1, 1956

**Cover Sheet for Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1956, Joshua Tree
National Monument.**

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**Joshua Tree National Monument
Twentynine Palms, California**

June 1, 1956

Memorandum

To: Director
From: Superintendent, Joshua Tree
Subject: Annual Report - Fiscal Year 1956

Personnel:

Permanent

Samuel A. King, Superintendent
Hessel L. Earenfight, Chief Park Ranger
Bruce W. Black, Park Naturalist, Dec. 12 to present
Charles F. Adams, Park Ranger, September 1, 1955 to present
John Adams, Landscape Architect, transferred to Crater, Sept. 1955
Lawrence F. Knowles, Landscape Architect, Oct. 31, 1955 to present
Mildred I. Miller, Clerk-Typist
Alva D. Connor, Mixed Gang Foreman
John R. Bianco, Operator-General
Paul E. Kats, Caretaker
Kenneth A. Van Tassell, Laborer

Seasonal

Ronald D. Miller, Information-Receptionist, WAE
Herbert D. Cornell, Park Ranger

During the fire season two Fire Control Aids were hired.

We are appreciative for having the services of a full time park ranger during the year, but additional staffing is needed in the protective division to cope with the ever growing numbers of visitors to the monument.

Good strides were attained in the interpretive division by the appointment late in 1955 of a park naturalist. Many talks were given in the local schools on natural subjects as well as before the various service clubs in the surrounding towns.

More efficient planning was indicated for both Death Valley and Joshua Tree National Monuments with the establishment of a resident landscape architect position.

General:

Interpretive facilities proved popular with visitors, especially the natural history trails at various points in the monument. The exhibit room at headquarters was also popular with visitors, some months over 4,000 visitors were given interpretive and informational services at that point.

Maintenance work on the various roads kept Mr. Conner's crew busy throughout the year. Severe damage to portions of the Joshua Tree Entrance Road in August 1955, necessitated the hiring of extra laborers to accomplish repairs, thus precluding the purchase of such needed road oil for stabilizing portions of dust palliatively treated road surfaces.

The highlight of monument business during the year was the approval of our MISSION 66 Prospectus on February 20, 1956. The entire staff is looking forward to the eventual implementation of this much needed program for Joshua Tree National Monument.

Summary:

Travel during the 1955 calendar year rose to an all-time high with 280,599 visitors. It appears however that this figure will not stand for long since travel for the first four months in the present calendar year totaled 148,977.

Campground use increased correspondingly, both by individual families and many organized groups. Many times the campgrounds were filled beyond capacity. The Sheep Pass Group Camp bore the brunt of most of the organized groups, although the Cottonwood Spring Campground suffered the most from overcrowding.

Lands:

The following lands were acquired either by purchase or exchange as indicated:

Charles H. Singer, purchase, 7 parcels totaling 60.00 acres.
Guy E. Pyle, exchange, 28 parcels totaling 205.90 "
Eula Belle Carter, purchase, 6 parcels totaling 40.00 "
Paul Turner, purchase, 1 parcel totaling 5.00 "
Riddell, exchange, Deed No. 21 2007.4 "

The largest single acquisition of private lands amounting to 1120 acres will be accomplished through a private exchange filed by Mr. Wendell Kinney for lands in T.1S,R.6E. This exchange has progressed to the point of advertising and seems assured. In addition Mr. Kinney has filed another exchange application which if consummated will bring an additional 800 acres under Federal ownership.

An exchange application filed by Mr. Joseph Wachowski using 160 acres of base land in Pinto Basin does not appear to be feasible, since the selected lands near Desert Hot Springs are much more valuable.

It is gratifying to report that an option was obtained from Mr. Forrest Wilson effective to September 30, 1956 on his 160 acre tract in Hidden Valley. This option was obtained in time to preclude its sale to private investors who were willing to pay a price exceeding that stipulated in the option to the United States.

It appears that another effort will be made by the Western Mining Council to open Joshua Tree National Monument to prospecting and mining. Apparently their plans for attaining this objective have not been crystallized at this time, but we may expect to hear from this group in the near future.

Public Relations:

The Superintendent appeared before the annual meeting of the Board of Directors of the Sierra Club, of California, in September 1955 to explain the objectives of MISSION 66.

Park Naturalist Bruce Black presented the illustrated MISSION 66 talk by Director Hirth to service clubs and conservation groups in Twentynine Palms and adjacent towns. On the whole it appears that the MISSION 66 Program has been accepted with a considerable degree of enthusiasm by the general populace.

Better liaison with organized groups developed a more favorable use pattern in the Monument. This was especially apparent with the large Boy Scout groups.

Improvements:

It is most gratifying to report that the shop and equipment storage building at Pinto Eye and the shop and equipment storage building at the Casis headquarters were completed on February 1, 1956. These structures are well built and functionally suit our purposes in an excellent manner. With the addition of these structures for housing equipment we are less vulnerable to vandalism.

Protection

The protection force was again taxed beyond capacity to cope with vandalism and establishment of illegal mining claims within the boundaries. Two additional permanent park ranger positions are needed in order to cope with the many infractions that occur in widely separated sections of the Monument. It appears now that adequate staffing in the protective division will not be attained until Fiscal Year 1958 as indicated in the staffing schedule of MESSICK 66.

Interpretations

The museum exhibits at headquarters proved to be popular and informative with monument visitors.

The natural history trails were likewise popular with visitors and many fine written comments were received attesting to the appreciation of them by visitors. Some 13,970 visitors availed themselves of this type of interpretive service during the 1955 calendar year.

The manuscript for the natural history hand-book on Joshua Tree National Monument by W. Egbert Schenk and Frank Owens was approved by Chief of Interpretation, R. F. Lee in April 1956. We are hopeful that it will be possible to have it printed by the Southwestern Monuments Association and make it available for sale.

December 12, 1955 marked the entrance on duty of Bruce Black as the first Park Naturalist for Joshua Tree National Monument. He has accomplished a number of improvements in the interpretive facilities for the monument and inaugurated a series of off and on area talks which were well received.

An accumulation of visual aids materials has been started but much more is required before a first class program can be presented. Besides the need for transparencies, an adequate slide projector is required in order to present good caliber talks to the many groups from which we receive requests.

Wildlife:

Field Studies on the Desert Bighorn sheep population initiated by Biologist Lowell Sumner last year and continued again in the early part of April this year indicates a need for additional permanent water supplies. Forage for these animals in the monument appears to be adequate, but with only two dependable water holes, it appears that their population will remain static until additional sources are provided.

From sight records there does not appear to be any appreciable increase of deer over previous years. Forage is probably not a factor since there is no range overlap in competition with domestic animals. Again lack of sustained water supplies may be the principal deterrent influencing populations. Mountain Lions are known to be present from one or two sight records made during the year, but it is doubtful that they are resident.

Coyotes were prevalent throughout the monument with no apparent marked increase or decrease in populations.

Rabbit populations appeared about the same as last year with no appreciable fluctuation.

Plans, Maps, Surveys

Surveys accomplished by the Bureau of Public Roads early in 1955 on the "Blue Cut" proposal, indicated that it is economically unfeasible to construct and maintain. However it appears that the Coachella Advisory Planning Committee is obstinate in their demand for an additional approach road to Joshua Tree National Monument. This was demonstrated by the Committee early in March 1956 when they passed a resolution requesting the Bureau of Public Roads to accomplish a survey of a route through Badger Canyon. While this proposal may have more inherent logic as compared to the "Blue Cut" proposal, the route itself encounters the same difficulties, i.e. excessive grades, etc., as was pointed out in the report on the latter.

The MISSION 66 prospectus for the development program at Joshua Tree National Monument was approved in the Director's Office on February 20, 1956. The implementation of this program will solve many of the problems facing the Service in this area including the more pressing ones of land acquisition and protection.

During the months of March and April the Geological Survey worked on map surveys in the monument.

The following plans were completed in the field: MI-JT-2071 Lubrication Pit; 2068 - Proposed Road Alignment, Rocky Point.

Completion reports for account 331.01, Grading and Wall, Oasis Utility Area; and account 333.01, Planting Oasis Headquarters Area were made.

PCP's - JT-R-50, Road Alignment, Rocky Point; and JT-R-26-2, Hiking, Equestrian Trail and Fire Road were completed.

Tests conducted over a 30 day period on Lost Horse Wells #2 and #3 substantiated our belief that these wells could furnish ample water to campers.

All 13 sections of the Master Plan Development Outline reflecting our approved MISSION 66 prospectus were completed.

The following plans were completed for Death Valley National Monument: 2068 - Headquarters and Residential Area, Cow Creek; 2068 A & B - Cow Creek Region; 2081 - Residential Design, Travertine Springs; 2082 Orientation Diagram, 36° North Latitude; 2083 - Cow Creek Public Use Area; and 2084 - Furnace Creek Residential and Utility Area.

Samuel A. King

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Superintendent