

COPY

NAVAJO COUNTRY

436 Postoffice Building
Denver, Colorado
April 28, 1931

The Director
National Park Service
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Director:

From March 6 to March 12, 1931, inclusive, Superintendent Tillotson and I visited the Navajo country of northeastern Arizona and southeastern Utah for the purpose of getting information regarding its suitability for national park purposes.

We started from Grand Canyon National Park, went over the Navahopi road, through the Megalooa petrified forest, passed the gorge of the Little Colorado River, crossed the river on the suspension bridge at Cameron trading post, crossed the Painted Desert, visited a small group of dinosaur tracks, another area of petrified trees, the petrified "Pumpkin Patch," the Hopi village of Moenkopi, Tuba City, which is the headquarters of the Western Navajo Indian Reservation, Red Lake, the Elephant Feet, Shanto Spring, Marsh Pass, Kayenta, Ol-jeto trading post and Harry Goulding's trading post (the latter two in Utah), the Monument Valley country, Rainbow Lodge, Rainbow Bridge National Monument in Utah, (a two day trip on horseback), Wupatki National Monument, the new Sunset Crater National Monument, and the Meteor Crater, ending the trip at Winslow, Arizona. The total distance covered by automobile was 550 miles.

It is recommended that an arrangement be made between the Indian Service and the National Park Service, for the establishment of a national park in the Navajo country. It is believed that a mutually satisfactory agreement can be reached between the two bureaus which would be to the advantage of the Navajo Indians. A national park in this area would include features of such outstanding scenic quality that it would be an important addition to the national park system and a national asset, of interest and value to the American people.

Since the most spectacular scenic features are separated by a considerable distance, it seems desirable that the proposed national park should consist of several detached areas. The areas suggested as follows:

1. Monument Valley. This area lies partly in Arizona and partly in Utah. There are many detached mesas, buttes and slender, towering pinnacles that are the products of heavy erosion over a large area. These "monuments" have a wierd and unreal appearance. The area is highly scenic, unique, interesting and unlike any existing national park. Most of the formations are brilliantly red in color. The area is arid and vegetation is of the desert type. The boundaries suggested are as follows: South bounday, Kayenta Creek, north of the town of Kayenta; east boundary, the county line between Navajo and Apache Counties, extended northward into Utah until it crosses the road from Kayenta to Bluff; the north boundary, a few miles north of the Goulding and Oljeto trading posts; the west boundary, a few miles west of the road from Kayenta to Bluff. This section would be about 20 or 25 miles in diameter, with an area of approximately 400 square miles. More than half of the area is in Arizona, and the balance is in Utah.

2. The Navajo Mountain and Rainbow Bridge area. This would include the present Rainbow Bridge National Monument, also Navajo Mountain, Navajo Canyon, Inscription House, and a portion of the Colorado River. Rainbow Bridge is the largest natural bridge, with a span of 278 feet and a clear height of 309 feet above the stream. It is a remarkable feature, in a highly scenic area. Navajo Mountain, 10,416 feet in elevation, is the sacred mountain of the Navajo Indians, and is a prominent landmark over a large surrounding region. The view from the summit is said to be exceptionally fine. Inscription House is one of the three detached areas of the present Navajo National Monument and of much archaeological value. Navajo Canyon is highly scenic and contains many prehistoric ruins. It is suggested that the south boundary should be the southern rim of Navajo Canyon; the east boundary should include Navajo Mountain, and extend northerly along the canyon shown on the map as Piute Canyon (the first canyon east of Navajo Mountain); the north bounday would include the junction of the San Juan River with the Colorado River and would include the Colorado River to the mouth of Navajo Creek. This section would be some 35 miles east and west, by about the same distance north and south. The total area would be about 900 square miles. About half of the area is in Utah and half in Arizona.

3. Tsagi Canyon. This section would include two of the detached areas of the present Navajo National Monument, namely the Keet Seel and Betatakin ruins. Tsagi Canyon, shown on the map as Laguna Canyon, is highly scenic, and it is proposed to take in enough of the canyon to include the two groups of ruins, and to extend to the point of approach, on the road from Tuba City to Kayenta, near Marsh Pass. This section would be some six or eight miles in width by about 12 miles in length, with an area of approximately 80 square miles. It is entirely in Arizona.

The above areas are the essential ones. There are, however, other areas that we did not have an opportunity to visit, but which are said to be of unusual scenic interest. The value of the national park would be increased by the addition of such suitable areas, but they are of smaller area, and while desirable, they are not essential. The areas that have been suggested are as follows:

4. Blue Canyon.)
 5. Coal Canyon.) These two canyons are located east of Tuba City. They are said to rival Bryce Canyon in highly colored and fantastically eroded forms.

6. The Goosenecks of the San Juan River. The San Juan River makes some great loops that are said to be remarkable in formation and scenically interesting.

7. Some sixteen miles east of Cameron is the largest known group of dinosaur tracks, containing about 300 foot-prints of various size and species.

8. Another, though much smaller group of dinosaur tracks, also an area of petrified trees, and also an area containing stone concretions, known as "petrified pumpkins," are located close to the road from Cameron to Tuba City. These features are subject to injury if not protected. They would not justify a national reservation by themselves, but they might be protected in connection with other features, and since they are readily accessible, they could be made a feature of interest and of educational value.

The logical headquarters for the proposed Navajo National Park would probably be Tuba City, since it is the headquarters of the Western Navajo Indian Reservation, and it would be important for the two offices to work in close cooperation. From this headquarters three existing national monuments could be more readily administered than under existing conditions. These are the Natural Bridges, in Utah, Wupatki in Arizona and the recently established monument that includes Canyon del Muerto and Canyon de Chelly. It is suggested that these national monuments be supervised in connection with the proposed Navajo National Park, but that no change be made in their present status. The proposed park would include and supercede the Rainbow Bridge and the Navajo National Monuments.

Accessibility:

The areas under consideration are reached by the road from Cameron (on US Highway 89) through Tuba City, Kayenta (Arizona) and Bluff (Utah). From Bluff one road leads north to Blanding, Monticello

and other Utah points, while another road leads east, joins US Highway 450 in Colorado, and connects with Cortez and Mesa Verde National Park.

This road through the Navajo Indian Reservation is mostly unimproved and is little more than "a way through," but it is the main route through a vast area, and has an importance far beyond its present development.

If this road were improved to ordinary standards it would become a main artery of travel from Mesa Verde National Park to Grand Canyon National Park. This distance from Mesa Verde to Grand Canyon, via the usual route, through Shiprock, Gallup, Holbrook, Flagstaff and Williams is 455 miles. The route via the proposed Navajo National Park is 357 miles, or a saving of 100 miles. This more direct route would be popular because of the unusual features along the route and others accessible from it. (See map on page 31).

Land Ownership:

The Navajo Indian Reservation is understood to be entirely government land, reserved for the use of the Navajo and Hopi Indians. The Navajo Indian Reservation extends to the northern boundary of Arizona and includes all of the proposed national park area that is located in Arizona.

Most of that portion of the proposed national park that is located in Utah is in the "Paiute Strip," that extends south from the San Juan River to the Arizona line. The Paiute Strip was formerly a part of the Indian reservation, but was opened to entry because of oil possibilities. Little or no commercially profitable development has resulted and it is understood that nearly all of this tract is still government land. There is considerable agitation to have this area again made an Indian reservation.

Conclusions:

It is recommended that the areas referred to be established as the Navajo National Park, under an agreement with the Indian Service.

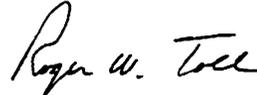
The area is of such outstanding scenic quality that it would be an important addition to the national park system. The scenery is varied, full of interest and is of impressive magnitude. Monument Valley, Tsagi Canyon, Navajo Canyon, Rainbow Bridge and its vicinity, are among the spectacular features of the area.

In addition to scenery, this proposed national park contains archaeological features, including Inscription House, Keet Seel, Beta-takin and numerous others. The total number of groups of ruins doubtless runs into the hundreds.

The Navajo Indians are a most interesting tribe and their blankets, their silver and turquoise jewelry and their other handicraft have a strong appeal to visitors. A national park in this region would be highly educational to the American people, and it would benefit the Indians by enlarging the market for their products, and in providing employment on construction work and other work for which they are qualified.

This proposed national park would have great interest to the American public because of its unusual features of ethnology and archaeology, as well as because of its unique and remarkable scenic qualities.

Very truly yours,



Roger W. Toll

CC Mr. Tillotson.