

**JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL MONUMENT
Twentynine Palms, Calif.**

Refer to A2629

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Twentynine Palms, Calif.**

Refer to: A2623

Memorandum

To: The Director
From: Superintendent, Joshua Tree
Subject: Annual Report

Personnel:

Samuel A. King, Superintendent
Hemel L. Farenfight, Supervisory Park Ranger
Mrs. Maizie C. Van Tassell, Clerk-Typist
Alva D. Conner, Mixed Gang Foreman
John R. Bianco, Light Truck Driver

In addition, two permanent positions were unencumbered, namely, Operator General and Laborer Leadman. One Seasonal Ranger position is encumbered from November 1, 1953 through April, 1954.

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

During May and June it was possible to have an Information-Receptionist assigned for week end duty at headquarters. This was made possible by the Regional Director by relinquishing contingency reserve funds.

Our entire staff is to be complimented for their unstinted efforts and achievements during the 1954 Fiscal Year. Staffing has been adequate in maintenance and rehabilitation activities, but the protection and interpretive sections were wholly inadequate. A good portion of time was spent by the supervisory ranger on construction programs during the year, especially the new administration building in addition to his regular protection responsibilities.

On the basis of present travel trends and increased public usage, Joshua Tree National Monument is definitely understaffed in both protective and interpretive personnel. Adequate staffing in these two departments in light of present and anticipated travel to an area comprising some 558,000 acres would require the following personnel: 1 Chief Ranger, 2 Park Rangers, 3 Seasonal Park Rangers, and 1 Naturalist.

Travel:

Again this year substantial increases in travel to Joshua Tree National Monument have been recorded. If present travel trends continue there is every indication that our total visitation for this travel year will probably amount to 225,000 visitors. Travel for the first five months has amounted to 133,169 visitors; this is an all-time record for the monument.

We were host to many organized groups in our campgrounds during the year. One group comprising some two thousand Boy Scouts camped at Indian Cove for three days. Then, too, many U. S. Marine Corps groups from the Twentynine Palms Marine Corps Training Center were accommodated at various campgrounds throughout the year.

Lands:

During the fiscal year just concluded deeds acquired through exchange for the following properties were received:

Deed No. 16	Newton Exchange	8,109.96 acres
Deed No. 17	Bensler Exchange	1,280.88 acres
Deed No. 18	Southern Pacific Railroad	640.00 acres
Deed No. 19	Keiper Exchange	<u>160.00 acres</u>
	Total acquired	10,184.24 acres

I am grateful to the very efficient people in our lands division for their fruitful efforts in working out these exchanges. I realize that there are many complexities in achieving this difficult responsibility, but each parcel acquired brings us a little closer to the ultimate goal.

Current negotiations with Mr. W. E. Monstad for some 720 acres of land in Queen Valley may be realized in the near future. Mr. Monstad has filed an informal application for an exchange involving some low grade acreage in the public domain north of Desert Center.

So far as is known here, the suit to be brought by the U. S. Attorney in the condemnation proceedings on the tax-deeded lands in Pinto Basin has not been filed.

The mining groups are still ative in the proposal to have Joshua Tree National Monument opened for prospecting and mining. The Riverside Mining Council prevailed on the Riverside County Board of Supervisors to pass a resolution favoring such action.

On July 19th, a group representing the San Bernardino Mining Council, appeared before the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors, requesting that they also pass such a resolution.

Some 964 mining claims were invalidated during tye year through processing by the Bureau of Land Management. This was made possible through funds supplied by the Service.

Public Relations:

Our relations with the local populace were greatly strengthened during the year, largely because of the new administration building erected at the Oasis. This has had the effect of conveying to the people that the National Park Service has tangible permanent interest in the welfare of not only the monument but the community.

We are still far apart with the Indian group represented by the Coachella Valley Advisory Planning Commission, who advocates the "Blue Cut" road through the monument. We are hopeful that the attitude of this group toward the National Park Service will attain a more cordial aspect if we are able to improve the present road through Pinto Basin from Highway 60-70 to Twentynine Palms.

While the people in the town of Joshua Tree make it known periodically to this office that they would like to see further improvements accomplished on the Joshua Tree entrance road, they are nevertheless cordial. In fact, the Joshua Tree Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution supporting the stand of the National Park Service in disapproving the proposed "Blue Cut" road.

Improvements:

The highlight of achievement at Joshua Tree National Monument during the 1954 fiscal year was the construction of the Administration Building at the Oasis, completed on February 28, 1954. The building is definitely a credit to the Service and functionally serves our purposes for administration and public contact in an efficient manner.

I should like to commend the Service architects for the unique design incorporated into the building which is in perfect harmony with the environment.

Another milestone was achieved in the latter part of the fiscal year when 4.9 miles of road on the Pinto Basin Route was treated with a dust palliative coat of SC-2 oil. This reduces the untreated portion of the Pinto Basin Route to approximately 15 miles. Some 16 miles on the Salton View Road was given a seal coat of SC-2 oil to stabilize the tread.

Protection

Some measure of success in the protection of shrubs adjacent to our campgrounds was accomplished due to our wood hauling program. Making fire wood available to campers has been at least partially effective in the saving of vegetation. However, we are waiting to hear about the Presto Log vending machines placed in use at Pinnacles National Monument. If they are successful there, we intend to explore the possibility of placing one or more in each of our campgrounds.

Interpretation:

Four natural history trails were established during the year, bringing the total of such devices up to six for the monument. Two of these trails, namely Arch Rock and Indian Cave, have the descriptive labels under glass. The other two, Cholla Garden and Cap Rock are provided with numbered posts and guide leaflets. During the first six months of 1954, an estimated total of 23,925 persons made use of the various natural history trails.

Wildlife:

From observations made by Service employees and other individuals, we believe the Bighorn Sheep population may be increasing slightly. Some eighteen were reported by a reliable individual in one day in the vicinity of Stubby Spring. Occasionally Bighorns are observed along the road in both Queen and Lost Horse Valleys. Two Bighorns were found dead by the rangers during the year and from outward indications they appeared to have succumbed to natural causes.

Deer are observed infrequently but from tracks observed near available water, their populations are at least static.

One mountain lion was observed by a visitor near Sheep Pass and one set of tracks was reported in the vicinity of Cottonwood Spring.

Coyotes moved in generally during the latter part of the fall of 1953, then there seemed to be a downward trend in numbers during the spring months. This, together with fewer rabbits in evidence, tends to point up the possibility that the coyotes levied upon the rabbits, then moved to adjacent areas.

Beechey Ground Squirrels seem to be faring well on provender made available by visitors at the various campgrounds.

Antelope Ground Squirrels are very much in evidence throughout the monument and are a great source of interest to park visitors.

Gambels Quail appear fairly numerous and Mountain Quail are observed in small numbers.

Very dry conditions have prevailed for the most part during the last fiscal year in Joshua Tree. Total precipitation for the calendar year 1953 amounted to 1.31 inches only! Total precipitation for the 1954 calendar year to date is 1.21 inches.

Samuel A. King
Superintendent