



Superintendent's Quarterly Report *July - September, 2004*

A Park for Minerva by Chief of Interpretation Joe Zarki

Hardly anyone today recalls Minerva Hamilton Hoyt and her tireless efforts on behalf of California desert protection. In fact, without her leadership, Joshua Tree National Park might never have become part of the National Park System. How a transplanted southern belle came to be a staunch backer of the protection of desert landscapes is perhaps one of the more unlikely stories in the annals of national park history.

Minerva Hamilton led a genteel early life attending finishing schools and music conservatories. Her marriage to Dr. Sherman Hoyt led her away from the Deep South to New York and eventually to the Pasadena area where she immersed herself in southern California high society and civic causes. She demonstrated talent as an organizer of special charity events and developed a passion for gardening. Gardening introduced her to some of the native desert vegetation commonly used in southern California landscaping. Trips to the desert instilled in Minerva a strong appreciation for the austere beauty of desert plants. She also saw the widespread wanton destruction of desert landscapes by thoughtless people who dug up, burned, and otherwise destroyed so many of the cacti and Joshua trees that Minerva found beautiful.

Following the deaths of her son and husband, Minerva dedicated herself to the cause of protection of desert landscapes. She organized several successful exhibitions of desert plant life that were shown in Boston, New York, and London. She founded the International Desert Conservation League, became its first president, and

adopted a goal of establishing parks to preserve desert landscapes. Mrs. Hoyt was selected by noted landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. to serve on a California state commission formed to recommend proposals for new state parks. She prepared the commission's report on desert parks and recommended large parks be created at Death Valley, the Anza-Borrego Desert, and in the Joshua tree forests of the Little San Bernardino Mountains north of Palm Springs.

Mrs. Hoyt became convinced that the best option for preservation of a large park to preserve desert plants was through the National Park Service. She began a carefully organized campaign to achieve her goal. Mrs. Hoyt recruited well known biologists and desert ecologists to prepare reports on the virtues of the Joshua Tree region. California Governor James Rolph introduced Minerva to President Franklin Roosevelt whose New Deal administration became active in the establishment of national parks and monuments as a jobs-creation initiative. Roosevelt asked his Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, to work with Minerva on her park proposal, and in Ickes, Mrs. Hoyt found an important new ally.

Her growing reputation in the cause of desert protection led to an invitation from the Mexican government to make recommendations on their efforts to establish parks and reserves in Mexican desert landscapes. Mrs. Hoyt met with the President of Mexico, Ortiz Rubio, who named Minerva the "Apostle of the Cacti" and announced the creation of a desert national park in honor of the International Deserts



Minerva Hoyt meeting with Mexican President Rubio

Conservation League and its work.

Returning to the United States, Minerva had a major success when President Roosevelt announced the withdrawal of over one million acres of federal land from mineral entry or homesteading in order to study the area as a proposed federal park. The National Park Service was asked to prepare a recommendation on the site, but instead of the million-acre park Mrs. Hoyt desired, the Park Service proposed a very modest 158,000-acre park comprising the Wonderland of Rocks and the best of the Joshua tree stands. Mrs. Hoyt complained to Harold Ickes about the National Park Service's lack of understanding of desert landscapes, and Dr. Harold Bryant, the chief scientist for the Service, was asked to take a second look at the area. Dr. Bryant returned a much more favorable report more in line with Mrs. Hoyt's vision.

Finally, on August 10, 1936, President Roosevelt signed a presidential proclamation establishing Joshua Tree National Monument. Minerva finally had her grand desert park.

Administration

Human Resources

The human resource staff reviewed, adjudicated, and/or denied over 828 servicewide background investigations and prepared corresponding letters and case documents. This is part of the new partnership between Joshua Tree National Park and the Division of Labor and Employee Relations Policy Division in WASO. In addition, we assisted with ongoing rewrites for the policy guidance for background investigations, the rewrite of a portion of Departmental Manual 441 and a new servicewide policy for Motor Vehicle Operation.

The HR staff processed over 100 personnel actions, two vacancy announcements, four position classifications and prepared contracts for several Student Career Experience appointments. The staff coordinated retirement training, prepared and processed one retirement case, and prepared buy-back figures for eight other employees. Workers Compensation cases included two injuries.

HR participates in the bi-weekly security meetings in WASO via teleconference and monthly conference calls with the PWR human resource manager. Wendy Hanson assisted in writing the SOP for the TelNPS system and continues to coordinate employee participation in telnet training and videotapes the courses.

The HR staff was very involved with the Eric Sears search providing logistics and timekeeping and coordinating check-in, check-out for the duration of the search.

Information Technology

The park's information technology operation

has become part of the Mediterranean/Mojave Network (M²) of the Pacific West Region. M² have redesigned the technical support of communications to a more local "self-help" design. Projects that would have required regional support are now addressed and completed by M². With the introduction of an online help desk, ten national park sites can now receive support for a wide variety of technical issues.

Mojave National Preserve has been the most recent recipient of support assistance from M². The fire station and visitor center at Hole-In-The-Wall were wired with over 7,000 feet of network cable in preparation for the installation of a network connection to the Barstow office. This will allow the visitor and fire centers to have access to the park network and internet services. Voice-over-IP phones will replace the twenty commercial phone lines currently in service.

Kelso Depot was the second major project of the M². This again involved adding network cable to the building. Three days of work resulted in 50 additional network connections and approximately 7,000 feet of network cable being installed. Both projects resulted in a cost savings of \$60,000.

Joshua Tree was awarded \$30,475 to aid in the replacement of the computers with an operating system of Windows 98 or older. Twenty-two new computers have been ordered to complete the one-for-one replacement. Rollout of these new machines will be completed before the end of the calendar year.

Protection

Park Rangers

Rangers, fee collectors, JOSAR, and the fire crew searched for 17-year-old Eric Sears for nine days after he wandered from Jumbo Rocks Campground.

A rescue was conducted at Hidden Valley Campground for a falling victim. The victim sustained significant leg and pelvic injuries due to poor placement of climbing protection equipment.

Illegal dumps were cleaned up and boundary posting was completed in two areas: Highway 62 and Onaga Trail.

Rangers were detailed to the DOI Watch Office and a flood emergency at Death Valley NP. Search and rescue training was hosted at Lost Horse Ranger Station, including training for paid staff and the JOSAR team. JOSAR logged over 3,000 hours of volunteer time throughout financial year 2004.

Special Use

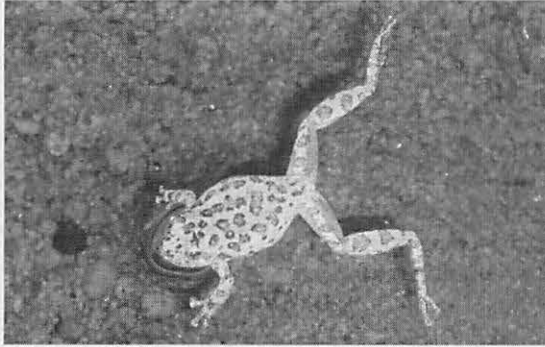
Two of the three months within this quarter were spent in a partnership agreement with Mojave National Preserve completing their Special Park Use Guidelines and initiating the transfer of Right-of-Way (ROW) permits from the Bureau of Land Management to the National Park Service. The work on ROW permits was to take the new template for Western Region and find the necessary information to complete the template's requirements.

The Special Park Use Guidelines for Mojave National Preserve was completed and signed by their Superintendent on September 21, 2004. During the same time the new Guidelines at Joshua Tree National Park were completed and signed by the Superintendent on July 15, 2004. Along with the new guidelines, a new cost recovery schedule was implemented.

Resource Management

Wildlife

Raven Point Count Surveys: Although the data set is still small, there does not appear to be a difference in raven numbers in human developed zones as compared to "natural" areas. We are collaborating with USGS-BRD on this project to make comparisons of the park's raven numbers and distribution to those on MCAGCC.



California Tree Frog, *Hyla Californiae*

California Tree Frogs: The last field visit was in the last week of September. It appears that the three populations that are extirpated have been lost due to lack of water. The populations at 49 Palms and Rattlesnake Canyon appear to be stable. The data is being compiled and we will begin writing the end of year report shortly.

Guzzler Use Survey: In an effort to collect data, infrared remote-triggered digital cameras were installed at all functioning guzzlers. Several hundred photos have been taken at some guzzlers (e.g. Stubbe) and no pictures at others (e.g. Russi Rocks). The project will run for an additional two years.

Desert Tortoise: While data collection for the Barrow site was completed in the first week of June, data is being compiled and the year-end summary is being written. We have been doing quality assurance and quality control checks of the data and correcting any database errors that are found.

Wildlife Observation Database: We have been creating a series of databases associated with wildlife in the park. Historically, visitor and staff wildlife observations have been maintained on handwritten cards. We are now in the process of entering all the historic card information into a database. We just completed a wildlife taxonomy database. This database includes a complete list of the animals in the park and is linked to the wildlife observation database.

Wildlife Photo Database: We took several hundred photos this year. In an effort to keep track of the photos, we have created a database that tracks the who, what, where, when and why of the photo (the metadata of the photo).

Physical Science

Luke Sabala, park physical scientist, has finalized a plan with Doug Craig of the California State Department of Conservation for continued support of the mine safing program at Joshua Tree National Park. The State of California is currently matching the expense of mine safing dollar for dollar with federal monies.

This quarter physical science staff have been assessing the threats to groundwater within Joshua Tree National Park. This preliminary assessment, in response to the renewed application of the Eagle Mountain pumped storage and the MWD's proposed groundwater storage project in Chuckwalla Basin, will help identify critical areas for a comprehensive groundwater study to be funded at a later date.

Air quality monitoring operations have continued this quarter. The visibility camera on top of Belle Mountain was replaced with an upgraded unit and a mass storage device is now being used to streamline the transfer of archival data to compact disc.

Luke Sabala was part of an open classroom session near Keys View that was hosted by University of Southern California and California State University Fullerton. The geology of the area is currently being studied by Andy Barth, recipient of the Lee/ JTNPA competitive science grant and a professor at Indiana University, and Scott Patterson of USC. Physical sciences will post any new developments or information in the next quarterly report.

Cultural Resources

Backlog cataloging of historic photographs, maps, and large format archives continued with the help of the archives branch of the Western Archeological and Conservation Center. Parkwide comments on the Museum Management Plan were sent to the editor. One thousand two hundred thirteen new catalog records were electronically submitted to the National Catalog along with information for the annual collection management report.

Stabilization work was done on the adobe at Ryan Ranch by a crew from Tumacacori NHP. Stabilization at the Pinto Wye Arrastra was completed by an NPS crew from Santa Fe.

A cooperative agreement between the park and the San Bernardino County Museum was signed for conducting paleontological work in the park.

Maintenance

Progress on the Visitor Protection Office: three coats of dry wall mud on 8,000 square feet of interior walls, a 1200-amp electrical upgrade completed. Outside base stucco and brown coat applied to exterior walls. Color coat to walls. Flooring to start in October with a target completion date by year's end.

The trail crew assisted DEPO in their annual fall trail closure. The trail crew and CCC members conducted a three-day spike/work camp.

All park campgrounds were operational on a seven-day service schedule the entire quarter.

Federal Highways completed 90 percent review for FLHP Project 292. The Environmental Assessment is presently being released for public comment by Denver Service Center. The contract advertisement is scheduled for mid-2005.

The Youth Conservation Corps program successfully completed a nine week program employing 15 local youths. This year's projects include work on Fortynine Palms trail and partnership projects at Great Basin and Channel Islands national parks.

The road crew completed repairs to 14 miles of roads with damaged shoulders, crack sealed Jumbo Rocks Campground. The contract for slurry seal of the headquarters parking lot and Jumbo Rocks Campground was completed October 15.

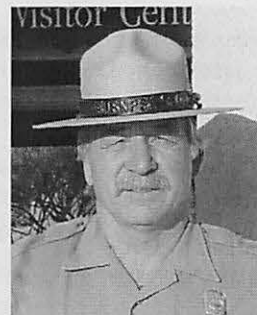
Fee Demo rehabilitation of the park's conference room is well under way. The interior was replaced with new walls, ceiling, and wiring. Installation of cabinets, counters, power-assist doors, trim and flooring will start October 12. Materials have been ordered for the mural attachment to the visitor center east wall.

Award Recipients



Campground Foreman Elena Crawford has been selected as the National Park Service's 2004 Accessibility Leadership Merit Award winner for her creation of a set of simple symbols that

are used in assigning daily tasks to a reading challenged employee. Elena created a chart with color-coded days of the week at the top of columns. In the column for each day are the color-coded symbols of the jobs to be performed that day. These same color-coded symbols on cards are attached to a set of keys needed for that day. The employee checks the chart, picks up the keys and symbol cards, and is able to perform his duties with minimal supervision.



Chief of Maintenance Harry Carpenter was recently recognized for his dedication to sustainable practices in an award ceremony hosted by the U.S. Department of Energy in Washington D.C. Harry's hard work and

determination have transformed the park with numerous sustainable projects. Diesel powered generators have been replaced with solar photovoltaic systems. Two brand new facilities utilize sustainable building materials while also incorporating high efficiency lighting, appliances, and dual-paned windows. Ten electric vehicles are used in the management of nine campgrounds. These projects have given the park significant savings in annual energy costs.

Superintendent

You may have noticed that last quarter's report did not include a note from the superintendent's office. That is because the park was enmeshed in a week long search for a 17-year-old individual lost in the desert. Unfortunately, this search resulted in recovering this young man after he had died.

I mention this in order to illustrate that, while Joshua Tree and the rest of the desert environments of southern California are majestic in their beauty, without proper preparation and understanding these areas can be harmful to the visitor. Please consider this when you, your family, or friends are considering a visit to any part of the greater desert environment. A

moment for safety could last a lifetime.

Our opening story this quarter concerns Minerva Hoyt and the upcoming celebration of Joshua Tree's tenth year as a national park. I hope you enjoy the article, and reflect upon the need for conserving these areas in our present world as compared to the vision of Minerva Hoyt in the 1930s. Night skies, access to solitude, and natural areas are values that Joshua Tree presently still offers. As we journey along this adventure we are sharing together, it is my hope that our mutual understanding of the processes that shape our communities will also positively affect the conservation of this and other national treasures.