White Sands

National Park Service
Department of the Interior
White Sands National Monument

White Sands Geologic Time Compressed to One Year

This timeline can be used to better comprehend geologic time in reference to the formation of the dunefield, which began to form 10,000 years ago. This may sound like the dunes are extremely old, but in the larger scheme of things they are actually incredibly new. For more detailed information on the formation of the dunefield, take a look at our geology brochure and geologic essay. These documents can be downloaded from www.nps.gov/whsa.

4600 BYA: Earth begins.	1 Year Ago
3900 BYA: First cells appear.	10 Months Ago
250 MYA: Permian Sea forms. Dimetrodons walk the Earth.	3 Weeks Ago
228 MYA: First dinosaurs appear. Plateosaurus is among them.	2 Weeks Ago
70 MYA: Formation of Rocky Mountains. Tyrannosaurus Rex roams the Earth.	4 Days Ago
30 MYA: Formation of Tularosa Basin and mountains. Horses and camels occupy the area.	Less than 2 Days Ago
3 MYA: Formation of Lake Otero, which was the size of Great Lakes Erie and Ontario combined.	3 Hours Ago
24,000 YA: Glacial Ice on Sierra Blanca forms. Herds of mammoths roam the basin.	6 Minutes Ago
11,000 YA: Glaciers melt.	3 Minutes Ago
10,000 YA: Lake Otero recedes. The gypsum dunes begin to form. Mammoths mostly disappear.	Less than 3 Minutes Ago
1933: White Sands National Monument is established.	Mere Seconds Ago

Information drawn from the Kentucky Geological Survey to relate to the Alamogordo area: http://funnel.sfsu.edu/courses/geol350/timescaleinayear.pdf

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